INSTRVMENTA PATRISTICA

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FROM CHAOS TO ENEMY: ENCOUNTERS WITH MONSTERS IN EARLY IRISH TEXTS. AN INVESTIGATION RELATED TO THE PROCESS OF CHRISTIANIZATION AND THE CONCEPT OF EVIL

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Voor mijn grootmoeder
Hubertha Jacoba Baarda-Guyt

Preface and acknowledgements

This book is the result of a long period of research. It started in the summer of 1988, after I graduated in theology. The place where I did the research in the first three years was my home; the structure was very much a self-made one: no job, no office, no colleagues. This period was a solitary quest through the desert.

Now and then I arrived at an oasis. One of them was the Celtic Department of the *Rijksuniversiteit* of Utrecht. Here, I was given courses in such disciplines as Old Irish and manuscript reading by Doris Edel and Leni van Strien-Gerritsen. I am very grateful for their hospitality and help.

In March 1991 I left the desert behind me. I now found myself on a raft in a swift river, encountering rapid after rapid. I had a job, an office and colleagues. My place of work became the Department of Theology at the *Vrije Universiteit* of Amsterdam. I want to name a few of my colleagues, to whom I am indebted: my *referent* Tjitze Baarda for his valuable corrections and suggestions; Constantijn Sikkel for his electronic help, pertaining to both computer and Internet activities; Henry Jansen for his advice on getting the work camera-ready; the secretaries for their administrative help, of whom I want to mention Jeltje Nauta in particular; and Trudeke Mekking for her corrections of my translations of the sometimes rather strange Latin texts. I also want to thank Bob Ordish, not a colleague from the Department but a friend, for his creativity and endurance while correcting the English in which I wrote this book.

The job broadened my horizons beyond not only my home but also the borders of the Netherlands. During my many journeys I had informative and fruitful discussions about the research project with several people, some of whom I want to mention by name: Aidan Breen, John Carey, Gearóid Mac Eoin, Martin McNamara, Donnchadh Ó Corráin, and Katherine Simms. I want to thank Anthony Harvey for introducing me to the Database of Medieval Latin from Celtic Sources and giving me access to it. During my stays in Ireland I had my workplace in the Dublin Institute of Advanced Studies. I would like to thank the Director, Máirtín Ó Murchú, and all the people working there, especially Eibhlín Nic Dhonncha, for their hospitality and all the help I received.

A special thanks is due to the following people, who never tired of answering my questions and from whose advice and comments I have learned considerably: Rolf Baumgarten, Proinsias Mac Cana, my second *promotor* Kim McCone, my *co-promotor* Tomás Ó Cathasaigh, and Ruairí Ó hUiginn.

I am greatly indebted to my first *promotor*, Anton Wessels, who with his support and inspiration offered me solid cooperation that only increased

throughout the years of the research.

Finally, I want to thank Adrie Bakker for his patience as he had to share me with the monsters from Ireland for eight years.

The period I spent on this research — from the summer of 1988 to the spring of 1996 — is twice as long as the official limits allow. But if one works with stories, these mathematical limits do not work. Stories remove you to a different world and, when they are stories from the past, you need more time to understand what is said and why it is said. The more answers you find, the more questions arise. Anyone embarking on a quest for stories should therefore be aware that the quest may become never-ending... For that reason, a certain time limit is necessary to ensure the researcher does not wander off into strange, enchanting areas, never to return. Eight years this, my quest has taken: eight beautiful, instructive years.

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"Everyone knows that dragons don't exist. But while this simplistic formulation may satisfy the layman, it does not suffice for the scientific mind. The School of Higher Neantical Nillity is in fact wholly unconcerned with what does exist. Indeed, the banality of existence has been so amply demonstrated, there is no need for us to discuss it any further here. The brilliant Cerebron, attacking the problem analytically, discovered three distinct kinds of dragon: the mythical, the chimerical, and the purely hypothetical. They were all, one might say, nonexistent, but each nonexisted in an entirely different way..."

— Stanisław Lem, *Cyberiad*

"Het leven zelf is al raadselachtig genoeg. Vanwege de overbekende chaos? Welnee, dat is het hem nu juist. Hoe vaak moet ik dat nu nog herhalen. Er is geen chaos mensen, geen enkele, heus niet, men doet maar alsof. Wat het leven zo onbegrijpelijk maakt, dat is de samenhang van alles. De overrompelende, helse, onontkoombare samenhang van de draaiende wereld met alles erop en eraan, en dan bedoel ik ook álles: van veertje tot schroefje, van kerststuk tot grafstuk. Ik besef het, het is mijn overslaande hart, het zijn mijn eigen doordravende hersens maar die die samenhang waarnemen, maar hoe je het ook draait of keert, *waarnemen* is nog steeds niet hetzelfde als *verzinnen*."

— Charlotte Mutsaers, *Rachels rokje*

"Passion will not be commanded.
It is no genie to grant us three wishes when we let it loose.
It commands us and very rarely in the way we would choose.

Passion. Obsession.
I have known both and I know the dividing line is as thin and cruel as a Venetian knife."

— Jeanette Winterson, *The Passion*

Map of Ireland
From: Kathleen Hughes, *The Church in Early Irish Society*, London, 1966

N

Fahan
oAilech
+Derry
Connor
CENÉL EÓGAN
UÍ NÉILL
AIRGIALLA
Bangor
+Movilla
Nendrum

ATLANTIC
OCEAN
Inishmurray+

Emain Macha
+Armagh

Kilnasaggart
+

Lauth+

Lann Léire +
Annagassan

Fore Kells Slane Monasterboice
+Ardbraccan+ @ +Duleek
Tara +Trevet
Kilmoone
+Lusk

IRISH
SEA

S. UÍ
NÉILL

Uisneach
o

MEATH
Clonard +Dunshauglin +Finglas

CONNACHT

Inishbofin o

+Tuam

Clonmacnois+ Rahan+ +Durrow Clondalkin+ Dublin
+Lynally Kildare +Killashee +Tallaght
Clonfert+ +
Kilcullen

+Birr
+Seir
Terryglass+ Roscrea+ +Glendalough
+Kilfenora +Achad Bó
Dysert O'Dea +Disert Diarmata
DAL o +Slatty
CAIS Kincora Killeshin
oLimerick +Leithglinn

OSRAIGE

UÍ CHENNSELAIG
LEINSTER

Ferns

Inis Cathaig+

Cashel
o

Emily

MUNSTER

+Mt.Brandon

Waterford o

Taghmon

Lismore
+

DÉISI

Skelly Michael

Dairinis+

Cork
+

Key
+ Ecclesiastical
and
O Secular sites

Introduction

The subject of this study is early Irish texts about the theme 'monsters', or, to be precise, 'encounters with monsters'. The period under investigation is from *c*. 600 — *c*. 1200 AD, which is usually designated 'early Irish'. The aim of this study is to contribute to the knowledge of the process of christianization in Ireland, to see how aspects of this process are reflected in the early Irish literary tradition, and to focus in particular on the development of the ideas about evil found in texts about encounters with monsters.

In this introduction I will briefly allude to the context of the production of texts in early Ireland and their religious contents. The scope of this study will be defined: first, the period that will be covered and, second, the theme that will be central to it. After a brief sketch of the earlier research into the theme, a large part of the introduction will be dedicated to the method applied in this study. There are two main lines of approach: first, there is the question of which descriptions of monsters or which aspects of them can plausibly be regarded as native Irish and which ones seem to have been taken over from external sources. Second, the development of the concept of evil will be analysed, which will be done with the aid of a hypothesis. Thereafter, the method of collecting, selecting and classifying the texts is described. The introduction ends by giving an outline of this study.

In the 5th century, in the wake of Christianity, literate culture came to Ireland. Prior to this, oral transmission was the only available means of passing on those parts of the culture expressed verbally, but thereafter it became possible to commit oral knowledge, narratives and poems directly or indirectly to writing[1]. An enormous amount of medieval Irish textual material in Latin and the vernacular is extant. Although none of the texts was written before the early medieval Christian period, it is generally agreed that some of the material contained in them has its roots in the pre-Christian culture. Texts of this kind are sources with which one might try to trace the way in which Ireland became christianised.

The oldest texts were written in Latin (from about the 5th century

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[1] It should be noted that, probably in the fourth century, an alphabet derived from Latin was invented: the Ogam alphabet. It was used for inscriptions of names in Irish on stone and wood (McManus, 1991, pp. 1-5, 51; for Ogam and christianization, see *ibid.*, pp. 55-61). However, these name-inscriptions fall outside the scope of this study, which deals mainly with narrative patterns.

onwards[2]) and at a relatively early stage (compared with most of the
European languages, apart from Greek and Latin) the vernacular language
was committed to writing (from about the 7th century onwards[3]). This
took place in the monasteries and their environment, where the native Irish
tradition received its place in written sources next to the imported Latin
and Christian traditions. The people attached to monasteries who wrote
texts were of course clerics, but it is not inconceivable that the traditional
learned classes — for instance, the *filid*, 'poets (historians, panegyrists,
satirists), learned people' — played a part in the transmission as well[4].
The cooperation between 'native' representatives (heroes and *filid*) on the
one hand and Christian protagonists (saints and other clerics) on the other
in committing old traditions to writing is a literary theme (see for instance:
Nagy, 1983a). It is hard to establish whether this literary motif is based
upon historical facts, but it is neither impossible nor improbable. This view
is, for instance, expressed by Rudolf Thurneysen:

"very soon after the introduction of Christianity these *filid* entered

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[2] For instance, the *Epistola*, 'Letter', and the *Confessio*, 'Declaration', of St
Patrick (edition and translation: Howlett, 1994, pp. 26-39, 52-93) are dated to the
5th century (Kenney, 1929/79, p. 166). For knowledge of Latin in Ireland before
Patrick, see Harvey (1992, pp. 13-6). In the same article, Anthony Harvey gives
an earlier date for the invention of Ogam — the second or the third century —
(*ibid.*, p. 16; compare above) and raises the possibility of writing in the vernacu-
lar before the sixth century (*ibid.*, pp. 18-22; compare below). See also the
impressive collection of material about this subject by Jane Stevenson (1989, pp.
127-65), who argues that literacy was used as an auxiliary technique in the service
of (oral) literature in the second or third century (*ibid.*, p. 143). According to
Stevenson (*ibid.*, p. 145), Latinity and literacy became naturalised in Ireland from
the fourth century at the latest.
[3] There is no unanimity of opinion about when writing in the vernacular started.
James Carney (1989, p. 39) lists poems that he dates to the 'pagan' period. He
adds in a footnote: "'Pagan period' is intended to express a date earlier than 450,
although, of course, it is conceded that it is not impossible, however unlikely, that
a genuinely pagan poem could be written at any date up to 600 A.D." (*ibid.*, n.
2). Carney seems to date the composition of the poems prior to 600 AD and the
actual beginning of writing to 600 AD. A different view is expressed by Kim
McCone (1989, p. 57) who sees the middle of the seventh century as starting
point. McCone (1990, p. 23) mentions the pioneer activity of Cenn Fáelad (†679)
who wrote poetic compositions in Old Irish that were included in legal tracts,
compiled in the first half of the 8th century. Compare also Harvey's view (see
above). See furthermore the careful survey of opinions on this matter by Proinsias
Mac Cana (1992, pp. 51-9).
[4] Doris Edel and Leni van Strien-Gerritsen (1988, p. 110) consider Colmán mac
Lénéni as the oldest example of a *fili* who opted for an ecclesiastical career
because he is called *athláech*, 'ex-layman, one who has become a cleric (presuma-
bly at a later age than the normal) (...)' in an early text.

into a close connection with monastic learning[5]", and: "the first
written copies hardly came about through a monastic denizen
asking a *fili* for his tales, but we should rather assume that some
filid acquired the art of reading and writing and themselves wrote
down what seemed worthy of recollection to them and presumably
also their own compositions[6]" (translated by McCone, 1990, p.
28).

This 'peaceful coexistence' of different traditions (native Irish and Chris-
tian) was a result of the strong integration of Christianity in early Irish
society.
    The native Irish tradition is sometimes called 'pagan' or 'secular'. I
prefer using the term 'native Irish' for the following reasons: the value
judgment that is inherent in 'pagan' is absent in these words. The disad-
vantage of the word 'secular' is that it is based upon a dichotomy of
'secular' and 'religious', in which 'religious' stands for the Christian
religion. This dichotomy is problematic: first, there is no sharp dividing
line between 'the world' and 'religious matters' in the context here referred
to (medieval culture) as there is, for instance, in 'secularised' societies of
the 20th century. Second, the Irish 'secular' texts are in some degree
structured by religious ideas: on the one hand by Christian thoughts and on
the other, by native or pre-Christian concepts. This study tries to discover
some of these religious ideas of the Irish which existed before Christianity
came and which still play some part after the arrival of the Christian
religion. For these reasons, the term 'native Irish' will be used for that
part of the culture that existed contemporaneously with Christianity but had
its roots in the pre-Christian culture of Ireland.

The texts that will be analysed in this study date from the earliest period of
text production to about 1200. The period under investigation ends in the
12th century, in the course of which continental monastic orders came to

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[5] "*Diese* filid *traten nach Einführung des Christentums in Irland sehr früh in enge
Verbindung mit der Klostergelehrsamkeit*" (Thurneysen, 1921/79, pp. 66-7).
[6] "*Aber die ersten Niederschriften sind wohl nicht so entstanden, daß ein Kloster-
insasse einem* fili *seine Geschichten abgefragt hat, sondern wir werden eher
anzunehmen haben, daß manche* filid *sich die Lese- und Schreibkunst aneigneten
und selber aufzeichneten, was ihnen erinnerungswert schien, und wohl auch
eigene Erzeugnisse*" (Thurneysen, 1921/79, p. 72). In the next sentence, Thurney-
sen suggests that the now lost manuscript *Cín Dromma Snechta*, 'the Book of
Druim Snechta', may have been a *fili*-manuscript. Mac Cana (1972, p. 103, n. 1)
disputes this: "It is doubtful whether anyone would accept this view of things
today. Legal texts apart, manuscripts of the MI [Middle Irish, JB] period are
exclusively monastic in origin and one supposes that the same must have been true
a fortiori in the earliest period: it is only in the post-Norman centuries that we
find clear evidence of the *fili* as scribe. In any event Thurneysen's view hinges
upon his ascription of *Cín Dromma Snechta* to the *filid* and this will not bear
examination".

Ireland and the Irish church became more and more adapted to continental standards. Moreover, in the 12th century the political situation changed as a result of the Anglo-Norman invasions, which also had consequences for ecclesiastical matters (see "The reform movement of the twelfth century" in: Kenney, 1929/79, pp. 745-71).

The chronological approach involves the problem of dating texts, which has different implications for those in Irish and in Latin. Concerning the Irish texts, it is important to note that virtually all narrative texts are preserved in manuscripts dating from the 12th century and later[7]. However, a number of these can be dated on philological grounds to before the 12th century[8]. The language of these texts is divided into two periods: Old Irish (ending in the 10th century[9]) and Middle Irish (till about 1200; after the 12th century, Early Modern Irish came into use). Therefore, in this study Old and Middle Irish texts will be included; special attention will be paid to texts dated to the Old Irish period.

The Latin texts will be treated slightly differently: I will limit this study to Hiberno-Latin texts that have been confidently dated to the 11th or earlier centuries. This is because Latin texts are very hard to date, which is why I will not take into account texts that have not yet been conclusively dated. Another reason is that 12th century Hiberno-Latin texts are often products of the above-mentioned religious reform movement or they may have been written as a reaction to the politically changed situation, which both mark the end of the scope of this study[10].

Another problem in dating texts (in Latin and Irish) is the fact that some of them underwent certain developments during several centuries: new redactions of older texts were made in later times, or in some texts older layers are distinguished[11]. However, in this study I will refer to the dates of the products that are at hand or, in other words, the dates of the extant texts.

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[7] "The earliest extant manuscript to contain Irish narrative texts is *Lebor na hUidre*. It is the work of three hands, and it has recently been suggested that all three scribes had completed their work by 1106 (...)" (Ó Cathasaigh, 1984, p. 293, n. 8).

[8] "It is often possible, on linguistic grounds, to assign the composition of a relatively unitary text to an approximate date, and the same can sometimes be done for a stratum or for strata of a compilatory text. But we can never hope to recover the pristine condition of any of our early texts" (Ó Cathasaigh, 1984, p. 293).

[9] David Greene (1966, pp. 10, 12) divides the periods roughly into 600-900 (Old Irish) and 900-1200 (Middle Irish). According to McCone (1989, p. 57) the Old Irish period ends in the middle of the 10th century.

[10] However, when a Hiberno-Latin text from the 12th century represents an important clue in the development of a theme that I am dealing with, I will include it.

[11] For the problem of dating texts, see Mac Eoin (1982). Gearóid Mac Eoin refers to the 'gradual growth' of texts on pp. 114-6.

This study of the process of christianization and the literary tradition concentrates upon the theme of the encounter with monsters. 'Monsters' are bestial and human creatures that deviate from the normal. They possess extraordinary characteristics (for instance, some of them are huge in size) and/or they are a composition of elements of different beings (for instance, the Greek Chimaera in the *Iliad* 6.179-82, edition: Willcock, 1978/87-84; translation: Hammond, 1987, p. 134, is a combination of a lion, a snake and a goat and it breathes fire). Monsters disturb the order of things. They can be very dangerous by infesting certain places, for instance by destroying the land and the harvests. When this happens they threaten life itself, bringing about evil.

Bestial and humanoid monsters are found in both iconographic and textual representations. The material is so vast that it goes without saying that the scope of this study has to be narrowed. Some of the monsters in this study are grotesque variants of animals well attested in insular Celtic[12] iconography (see Ross, 1967/93, pp. 378-446). However, I will neither deal with iconography here, nor will humanoid monsters be included. This study concentrates upon bestial monsters as described in texts (for more about the criteria used in this study, see below).

Although monsters play an important part in early Irish texts, their role in the early Irish literary tradition has not received much attention. There is only one monograph in this area: *The Celtic Dragon Myth* (Campbell, Henderson, 1911/81). This book consists of an introduction to the theme (no page numbers); an English translation of *Táin Bó Froích*, 'The Cattle Raid of Froech' (TBF), but in this work entitled: "The Geste of Fraoch[13]" (*ibid.*, pp. 1-17); under the same heading the text and translation of a later poetic version from the Book of the Dean of Lismore (*ibid.*, pp. 18-31); a folklore tale "The Celtic Dragon myth" (*ibid.*, pp. 33-128) followed by some notes (*ibid.*, pp. 129-48) and two tales in Scottish Gaelic written down in the 19th century (*ibid.*, pp. 149-72). The introduction gives many references, but little or no attention is paid to either chronology or context. For instance, in the analysis of TBF later versions are sometimes indiscriminately used and parallels with external mythologies are referred to in a way which, in my opinion, does violence to the evidence of the text itself[14]. The whole approach bears some similarity to

[12] Serpentine figures are also found on pre-historic monuments (O'Kelly, 1973, pp. 359, 366-78), which might indicate that the pre-Celtic inhabitants of Ireland used beasts in a symbolic way as well.

[13] For a recent edition and translation (in German), see Meid (1970). Wolfgang Meid (1967/74, p. xxv) dates the text to 700-750.

[14] Queen Medb is suggested to be some "sea-mother"; the warrior Froech becomes "the Celtic Hercules Furens"; the rowan berries turn into "the Tree of Life, the food of the gods, the eating of which by mortals brings death", and are compared with the golden apples of the Hesperides; and, last but not least, the monster that lives in the water is called the dragon guarding the rowan tree and is compared with the Hydra.

19th century religious theories[15], which is not surprising given the age of the book, but this underlines the observation that this approach is quite out of date. Both chronology and context should be taken seriously and the focus should be on questions such as: what is specifically Irish in the texts; what has been taken over from external sources; what has parallels in texts from related cultures.

In focussing on monsters this study aims to find out whether the description of a monster is native or imported. What one would ideally like to show is a classification of monsters into three different types: 'native Irish', 'imported', and 'integrated' monsters. In practice this is by no means easy. The category 'imported' monsters has the firmest base because it refers to literary evidence from other cultures. A monster is 'imported' when its description is directly taken over from a non-Irish source. Then there are two Irish types: first, a monster of the 'integrated' kind is likewise based upon non-Irish sources, but characteristics (perhaps from other sources) are added and/or combined in such a way that a 'new' monster emerges. Second, 'native Irish' monsters are monsters first and/or only described in Irish texts (in the Latin or Irish language). When no external sources seem to be used in the monster's description I classify it as native Irish: this involves a certain *argumentum e silentio* in so far as I have not been able to identify their sources (yet). This leaves open the possibility of the monster having pre-Christian roots, although one has also to take into account that it might be a product of the author's imagination. In the case of some variant forms of the monster in non-Irish texts, for instance if it seems to belong to a mythological complex from the Indo-European cultures, one might conclude that it belongs to the older background of Irish mythology[16].

It is important to note that Calvert Watkins (1987, p. 271) posits an Indo-European version of the "quasi-universal" (*ibid.*) myth of a God[17]/hero slaying a dragon or other reptilian opponent. Watkins (*ibid.*) believes that he has found the particularities that characterise the Indo-European version in the formulas used in the various texts that relate the myth. These "formulas are collectively the verbal expressions of the

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[15] One could read this, for instance, in sentences like the following: "His [Froech's, JB] quest may be a solar journey; and he is swallowed by the monster as the sun is swallowed by the sea" (Campbell, Henderson, 1911/81, n.p.). Incidentally, Froech is not swallowed but the monster bites into or hangs on his side.

[16] This is similar to the method McCone (1990, p. 120) applies when he shows how certain key elements of early Irish kingship were inherited from the Indo-European institution, ideology and mythology of sacral kingship. He further observes that one should examine how political and ideological concerns of monastically oriented scribes influenced the early Irish descriptions of kingship (*ibid.*, p. 121).

[17] As I am writing this study from the point of view of comparative religion, I make no value judgment about the truth concerning the divine. I will therefore use capitals when I refer to any personified form of the divine.

traditional culture of the Indo-European" (*ibid.*, p. 270). The formulas carry the themes, the deep structure, and thus convey the world view (*ibid.*). The formula that would characterise the Indo-European dragon-slaying myth is a sentence which consists of the absence of an overt subject, a verb denoting 'slaying[18]' in a scheme like (HERO) SLAY SERPENT (& WEAPON) (& COMPANION), whereby this may also be reversed into SERPENT SLAY HERO (Watkins, 1987, *passim*[19]). Watkins refers to this Indo-Iranian mythological complex in the beginning of his article (*ibid.*, pp. 273-8), which has parallels in other Indo-European and Semitic literatures. This complex is characterised by specific elements, such as a cosmic opponent in the form of a dragon (called Ahi/Vṛtra in India, Aži Dahāka in Iran; see Widengren, 1969, *s.v.* '*Drachenmotive*[20]') who withholds the water and/or steals women/cows — endangering fertility — and who is conquered by a God/hero who uses a special weapon. In Semitic mythology the monster is connected with water, and the re-enactment of the myth of the cosmic battle between the God and the beast seems to have had its cultic place at the New Year's festival (see Gaster, 1950/66, *passim*, but especially pp. 137-71). Watkins's analysis would have gained strength if he added a description of each specific text in its cultural-historical form to his theory about the relationship between representatives of this mythological complex from several cultures. One

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[18] Greek πεφν-, φον-, Vedic *han-*, Avestan *jan-*, Hittite *kuen-*, Germanic *ban-*, all deriving from the Indo-European *$g^w hen$.

[19] Although Watkins gives an interesting analysis of the motif of 'killing guests' (in a double sense), he seems to broaden the scope of his study too much when he extends his data with opponents who are heroes instead of monsters. There is another methodological problem involved: how does one find 'the Indo-European touch' if one does not compare the material with non-Indo-European formulas?

[20] It should be noted that the reconstruction by Geo Widengren (and others) of the Iranian myth in connection with a ritual complex of '*Männerbünde*' and the New Year festival has not been accepted by scholars of Iranian texts (see for instance, Boyce, 1975, p. 102, n. 110). Moreover, the connections between Indian and Iranian texts on this motif seem to be not as simple as Widengren describes them: "At the time of the Indo-Iranian unity, the Indo-Iranians must have imagined dragons restraining the heavenly waters and causing drought, and not releasing them until slain by a god or hero, as in the Rigvedic myth of Indra and Vṛtra. In the Iranian Zoroastrian literature, however, (...) dragons are rarely mentioned in connection with water, though they are sometimes said to dwell by rivers. The demon which causes drought seems not to be a dragon (...). Myths of dragons and the slaying of dragons were common among both other Indo-European peoples and the Near-Eastern peoples with whom the Iranians came into contact from the first half of the first millennium B.C. (...) It is of course difficult to establish detailed connections between these various Indo-European myths, and some scholars prefer to see individual developments rather than elements inherited from a distant past (...). It therefore seems clear that although dragon-slaying gods and heroes were part of Indo-Iranian mythology, India and Iran developed distinct myths early, changing, deleting, and adding details" (Skjærvø, 1985/89, pp. 191-2). I am indebted to Ab de Jong who has informed me of these views.

should also treat of the link with the Semitic variants, especially if one wants to characterise the myth as 'Indo-European'.

Nevertheless, for this study it suffices to state that in the Indo-European culture from which the (Irish) Celtic culture in some measure[21] derived, there were examples of tales about a hero/God who encounters a monstrous animal. Here, the central issue is precisely what form this mythological complex assumes in Irish texts.

Furthermore, in order to analyse the concept of evil in Irish texts about monsters, the following hypothesis will be used. In the Irish literary tradition the symbolism of monsters seems to change under the influence of Christianity. The dangers of the natural world in the Irish world view (non-moral evil) was extended by the idea of a supernatural evil power personified by the Devil (moral evil). *My hypothesis is that monsters originally represent non-moral evil, the powers of Chaos. As Christian influence on the texts increases they seem to attain an extra dimension in addition to their non-moral manifestation. They also begin to personify moral evil.*

Evil is that which is opposite to good. Evil is harm and that which causes harm. I divide the abstract notion of evil into two areas for the purpose of this study. Non-moral evil, sometimes also called natural evil, is harm done to creatures while there is no-one to blame. Nothing or nobody has willingly inflicted the evil upon others. A few examples are: a person drowning in a dangerous current, animals and people dying from a plague, a city destroyed by a vulcanic eruption. One could characterise this as the capricious or chaotic forces of nature. The term chaos, however, gives rise to complications: if chaotic forces can be evil, then it seems that order is good or not evil and that the order of the world is good for its inhabitants. Obviously, this is a religious world view, which will receive more attention below (see 1.3.3). Moral evil is at hand when harm is willingly done. Someone is to blame for the pain, the evil; someone is guilty of the harm inflicted upon others.

There can be an overlap between moral and non-moral evil. A famine is a non-moral evil when caused by bad weather which destroys the harvest, but when people die from it because of other people withholding their help, moral evil comes into it too. When this is interpreted from a metaphysical point of view, things become even more complicated: the famine may be said to be caused by a divine person who wants to punish people for their evil deeds. The people are called the guilty ones; they are blamed, or one person or a group of persons in or outside a community gets the blame and serves as a scapegoat. To go one step further: if one applies the above-mentioned definition (that moral evil is harm willingly done) to the divinity who willingly sends evil to the people, one could even say that the divinity is guilty of doing moral evil.

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[21] Another factor in the make-up of Irish culture would be that of the pre-Celtic inhabitants of the island. One cannot, however, methodologically include this as there is no direct evidence of their beliefs.

Obviously, ideas about evil are complicated and many-sided. One of the methodological problems in this study is the interpretation and classification of evil, as there may be a gap between the way the concept of evil is looked at in the old texts studied here and 20th century ideas about the matter. I can only hope that my 'modern' classifications and interpretations help to shed light upon the ideas about evil as found in the texts.

The hypothesis used in this study is based upon the notion that Christianity introduced a new idea and image of good and evil into the Irish culture. In the process of christianization, biblical traditions were imported. The tendency to classify monsters in the realm of moral evil is present in the Bible, especially in eschatological and apocalyptic writings. Moral evil is an area associated with the Devil and sin: sin is moral evil and the Devil is the personification of moral evil. Special attention must be paid to the dragon or the snake, the monster pre-eminent in Christian literature (and in Jewish texts taken over by Christianity like the Tenach or, in Christian terms, the Old Testament). The serpent introduced sin into the world in the second creation-story in the first book of the Bible, *Genesis* (Gn 3:1-5[22]). In the last book, the *Apocalypse of John*, the Devil is portrayed as a dragon, explained as the old snake (Apc 12:9; 20:2[23]). He is the enemy and adversary of God and humankind. As ultimate symbol of evil he must be fought against.

The dragon or snake can be a representative of the powers of Chaos in the Bible as well. God creates order by restraining and restricting the power of the dragon (for instance, in the *Psalms*; for more about this, see below). This combat is executed on a cosmological stage. There is also a political layer in the biblical imagery: the dragon can be used as a metaphor for an enemy ruler, both in the 'Old' and in the 'New Testament' (see Day, 1985, *passim*). This symbolism is also to be found in the intertestamental and later texts that are related to biblical material. These texts are in this study called 'non-canonical texts', as they have not been included in the biblical canon.

To arrive at an overview of the development of the theme of encounters with monsters in the early Irish literary tradition I have used the following approach.

I have collected texts that relate to monsters. The starting point was Tom Peete Cross's *Motif Index of Early Irish Literature* (1952/69). This work offers a wealth of references, but unfortunately is not entirely

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[22] All references to the Bible in this dissertation are to the Vulgate, unless otherwise stated.

[23] This idea was used comparatively early in a Hiberno-Latin text: in *Altus prosator*, 'The High Creator' (AP; edition, translation and commentary: Bernard and Atkinson, 1898, I, pp. 62-83; II, pp. 23-6, 140-69), a poem ascribed to St Columba (519/522 — 9 June 597), this image of the Devil as dragon and serpent can be found in stanza D. See 3.3.2.5, for more about this.

accurate. There are references to non-existent sources in this book[24] and
the classification is sometimes misleading: for instance, a biblical sea
monster called Leviathan is sometimes referred to when there is no direct
connection with this mythical animal[25]. The classification is not accurate
either because it puts under the heading of 'dragon' or 'snake' all kinds of
monster of which the identity is not certain (for instance, in the case of the
Irish word *bíast*, which is a loan word from Latin (*bestia*) meaning 'beast,
monster[26]'). Finally, a dating of texts is completely lacking in this work:
texts from the 19th or 20th century stand next to Old Irish references.
Nevertheless, as a starting point, the Index is indispensable.

From the Index's references I have made a new survey of Irish texts
about the encounter with monsters using both chronological and thematic
criteria. The chronological criterion has been mentioned above: only texts
from the period up to the 12th century were taken into account. Further-

[24] For instance, one of the references in B61 ("Leviathan") is to *Revue Celtique*
(RC) 9, p. 19. In this place an edition and translation of *Immram Snedgusa ocus
Maic Ríagla*, 'The Voyage of Snedgus and Mac Ríagla', by Whitley Stokes (1888)
is found. There is no reference whatsoever to Leviathan either on this page or in
this text. Or, for example, G346 ("Devastating monster") refers to RC 15, pp.
257, 301. On p. 301 one finds a specimen of the *dindšenchas*, 'history of notable
places (lit. hill-lore), topography, legendary lore'. (The *dindšenchas* is written in
Middle Irish prose and poetry.) The page under discussion gives explanations of
the place name Sliab Bladma, of which one is that it derives from *bleda mara*,
amphibious sea monsters that destroy trees (Stokes, 1894, p. 301; for more about
this, see 1.3.2 *sub* Old and Middle Irish texts). However, no devastating monster
is present on p. 257. One could make a substantial list of these non-references.
[25] Cross B16.8 ("Leviathan casts up gorge which spreads disease") does not
contain any direct reference to Leviathan. It refers to the *dindšenchas* on Mag
Muirisc/Muiresce. One of the explanations of the name of the place is the
connection with a large sea fish (*muiriasc*) also called *Ros(s)ualt* (Stokes, 1892b,
pp. 507-8; *id.*, 1894, pp. 476-7; Gwynn, 1913, pp. 428-9), which spews three
times. This either presages or causes destruction. To my knowledge, there is no
evidence that this beast is a representation of Leviathan. Incidentally, there is also
a more general classification of this beast in Cross: B16.8.1.1: "Sea-beast: when
it belches landward, it causes disease". (For more about this monster, see 1.3.2.)
[26] For instance, Cross B11.7.2 ("Dragon guards lake") and B11.11 ("Fight with
dragon") refer to an entry in the *Annals of Tigernach* (Stokes, 1895, p. 404)
where a *bestia* is mentioned. I quote this entry below (in 1.3.2) as a variant
version of the text central to chapter 1. There is no evidence that this beast is a
dragon. Another example is the edition and translation of TBF by Mary Byrne
and Myles Dillon (1937) to which several Index numbers refer. Some of them
refer to the *bíast* of this text as (water) monster (B875.1: "Giant water-monster
attacks man"; G308.2: "Water-monster"; F628.1.0.1: "Strong man slays mon-
ster"), whereas others classify it as a dragon or serpent (B11.7.2: "Dragon guards
lake" (incorrectly referring to EC (*Études celtiques*) 3 instead of EC 2); B91.5.2:
"Lake-serpent (monster)"; D950.0.1: "Magic tree guarded by serpent (dragon)";
H1333.3.0.1: "Quest for branches of tree guarded by dragon"). It looks as if
there is some influence from the monograph by Campbell and Henderson here.

more, the following thematic criteria were used in order to limit the scope and establish which monsters came into consideration:

a. The monsters should be animal-like or bestial. Humanoid monsters (like the Fomorians) fall outside this study's scope because they would make the sheer volume of material unmanageable[27].

b. A danger or a threat should be present. Size and appearance are not of importance as long as the monsters are dangerous. This also means that stylistic adornments of a text are excluded.

c. The monsters should have a supernatural and/or extraordinary aspect. Fierce animals that destroy and devour, but in which there is no sign of the extraordinary or the supernatural, will not be taken into consideration[28].

An enumeration of the collected texts is to be found in appendix II, where they are classified as well[29]. Classifying texts is of course an artificial enterprise. The texts that are the subject of this study are part of a complex early medieval Irish culture. However, they have certain characteristics which can be used for classification in the attempt to find an order in this complex material. One could, for instance, make a division based on language (Latin or Irish). In this study, however, classification of texts is based on the early Irish 'genres': the early Irish narratives were classified by type based on key-words[30]. I have made three headings to cluster these genres. First, a group of heroic texts which contains texts designated by key-words like *aided*, 'violent death', *cath*, 'battle', *compert*, 'conception' (which refers to a birth tale), *echtra*, 'adventure, adventurous journey', *fled*, 'feast', *immram*, 'rowing around, sea-voyage', *táin bó*, 'cattle raid', *tochmarc*, 'wooing', and *togail*, 'destruction'. These narrative texts have as their main characters heroes from the early Irish heroic society (sometimes Christian elements have become predominant in them[31]).

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[27] I have opted for the bestial kind of monster because I did some preliminary studies of dragons and serpents in non-Irish mythologies. The results of those studies were used for this one.

[28] There are, of course, always borderline cases, like the huge boar and the serpents dealt with in chapter 2. They fall within the criteria set out here, but one could argue that they are more natural than supernatural (for more about this, see chapter 2).

[29] This is a provisional list of titles of texts. In the future, I hope to publish a catalogue of early Irish texts about monsters.

[30] There are two Middle Irish lists of tales extant (called A and B) in which the tales are thematically arranged, "dividing the titles into groups with a common type of subject" (Mac Cana, 1980, p. 30). They were edited together with two minor lists by Mac Cana (*ibid.*, pp. 41-65).

[31] The *immrama* are a good example of texts in which Christian elements are intriguingly present. *Immram curaig Maíle Dúin*, 'The voyage of Máel Dúin's boat' (ICMD; edition and translation: Oskamp, 1970; the text is dated to the second half of the 9th century; *ibid.*, p. 48) is a good example of how elements from the heroic and ecclesiastical background are combined. Just as its main personage, the hero and warrior Máel Dúin, is the result of a (forced) union between a violent

The second group consists of hagiographical texts. In this group, I include texts designated by the genres called *amra*, 'eulogy', *bethu*, 'life', *navigatio*, 'sea-voyage', and *vita*, 'life'. They deal with the adventures of saints and paint an image of the ideals of the new religion.

Cosmological and eschatological texts form the third group. These texts describe how things came to be, how they should be and how they will be. This group contains, for instance, place-name (*dindšenchas*), visionary, homiletic, and other material[32].

The texts should be seen against the background of a sliding scale with extremely native Irish at one end and extremely Christian texts at the other. The extremes are, of course, idealisations and probably do not exist; the majority of the texts will have to be accommodated somewhere along the scale, depending on their characteristics. One might expect to find heroic texts more at the native Irish side of the scale and eschatological texts at the Christian side. However, these expectations will have to be put to the test: each text must be treated in its own right.

Outline of the dissertation

In this dissertation three texts about encounters with monsters will be studied: *Echtra Fergusa maic Leiti*, 'The adventure of Fergus mac Leite' (EFmL: chapter 1), *Vita Sancti Columbae*, 'The Life of St Columba' (VC: chapter 2), and *Epistil Ísu*, 'The Letter of Jesus' (EÍ: chapter 3). These texts are selected on the following grounds: first, all three texts stem from the Old Irish period: the first is dated to the 8th century; the second to *circa* 700 and the third perhaps to the 8th, but more probably 9th cen-

warrior and a peaceful nun the text itself seems to consist of a mixture of motifs from the 'warrior' and the ecclesiastical culture. These different mentalities are clearly shown in ICMD: the beginning of Máel Dúin's voyage is connected with his father: faithful to the warrior culture he leaves his country to avenge his father's death. The end of his adventurous journey is, however, more in line with his mother's culture: the enemy should be and is forgiven. The voyage goes from revenge to reconciliation; from a druid's to a hermit's advice; ending in a message about a change of mentality which is desired according to Christian ideals. Another text, however, which is also labelled 'sea-voyage' (*navigatio*) is ecclesiastical through and through; moreover, it has a saint as its main character, which is why I have included it among the hagiographical texts (the second group). This is *Navigatio Sancti Brendani abbatis*, 'The voyage of St Brendan the abbot' (NBA; edited by Selmer, 1959/89; translated by O'Meara, 1976/85). This text was recently dated to not later than the third quarter of the 8th century (Dumville quoted in Sharpe, 1991, p. 17). Richard Sharpe (*ibid.*) also gives references to later dates proposed earlier by Carl Selmer (early 10th century, which was rejected by Carney, 1963) and Giovanni Orlandi (9th century).
[32] Texts that do not fit under one of these three headings are collected *sub* 'miscellaneous texts' in appendix II.

tury[33].

Second, the monsters in the texts play an interesting symbolical role. In the first text a water monster is related to the decline and death of a king, who is the main personage in the story. In the second text the monsters serve to demonstrate the superior power of a saint as a representative of the new religion. Moreover, this is the oldest Irish text to describe a conflict between a saint and a water monster. Finally, it is interesting to compare this water monster with the one in the first text. In the third text, monsters serve as a punishment for the transgression of a new rule, which is the text's subject.

Third, the texts are good representatives of the three groups they are taken from. Central concepts from the early Irish or heroic world view play an important part in the first text. The second text is one of the earliest extant Irish hagiographical texts; the text was written on Iona, but this Scottish island was an important centre of the early Irish church (see for instance, Herbert, 1988, pp. 52-6). The third text serves as an instance of the cosmological and eschatological texts. A new order is established: one day of the week (Sunday) should be observed as a sacred day. This order is enforced by the mention of supernatural sanctions, in which eschatological traditions also play a part.

These three texts are submitted to the following questions:

1. How are the monsters described?
2. Which sources have been used in their representation? Which variant versions are there?
3. What relation do the monsters have to evil; what kind of danger do they represent?
4. How is this danger neutralised or overcome?

The questions mentioned *sub* 2. need some clarification and elaboration. I take sources and variant versions together, for it is not always certain if a text may have been the one or the other. One has to deal with such problems as determining the older text, determining whether the source text was available to the author of the other text and, finally, remaining aware of the possibility that motifs may occur independently of each other. The sources do not necessarily have to be Irish and sometimes descriptions of ordinary animals are included as they may have been the basis for a monster's description. The variant versions, however, should be Irish and must not be dated to a period later than the 12th century. Furthermore, only variant versions that mention monsters are included in the analysis.

In the sections on sources and variant versions, I describe monsters from other texts that share aspects with the monsters central to the three chapters. The search for similar monsters starts with the Vulgate, whose contents the scribes of the texts will have been very familiar with. This is followed by non-canonical scripture like apocrypha and pseudepigrapha. It

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[33] For information about these texts' dates, see the first section of each relevant chapter and appendix I.

is often difficult to prove whether these sources were known in Ireland. Important research has been carried out in this area, especially by Martin McNamara, but there is still a lot open to investigation. When I present a text of this kind I will also indicate whether it is extant in Latin (as this language was familiar to the Irish) and/or known in the West of Europe — if this information is available[34]. Only when there is reason to assume that there is a relationship between a non-canonical text and the description of a monster will I go into detail about these texts. Then I will turn to the *Etymologiae*, 'The Etymologies' (edition: Lindsay, 1911/71[35]), by Isidore of Seville (*c.* 560 — 636), which are highly important for Irish texts[36]. Sometimes other relevant texts in Latin (and, in chapter 3, Old English sermons as well) will be adverted to. Finally, Irish material will be described: both Hiberno-Latin and Old and Middle Irish texts will be studied.

The first two questions bear on the attempt at discriminating between native Irish and imported elements in the description of the monsters; the second two are connected with the analysis of development of the ideas about evil.

These four questions form the structure basic to the third section of chapters 1, 2 and 3. However, the third section of the first chapter (1.3.3) is somewhat more elaborate as it will give a description of concepts from the early Irish world view that play a part in the *Adventure of Fergus mac Leite*. A treatment like this is not necessary in the case of the *Life of Columba* and the *Letter of Jesus* because Christian concepts are comparatively well-known. Therefore, in 1.3.3 special attention will be given to the 'Other Reality' (in two forms), *geis* (plural: *gessi*), 'a tabu, a prohibition, an injunction, a spell, (...)', and sacral kingship.

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[34] See Ó Fiaich (1989) for contacts between the Irish and continental Western Europe.

[35] The book about animals (Book XII), which is most important in this context, has been translated into French by Jacques André (1986).

[36] Michael Herren (1980, p. 250) states that the *Etymologies* may possibly have reached Ireland before the middle of the 7th century. See also Hillgarth (1984, especially p. 8).

1. *Echtra Fergusa maic Leiti*,
'The Adventure of Fergus mac Leite'[37]

Introduction

The text taken as a representative of the heroic group is *Echtra Fergusa
maic Leiti*[38] (EFmL), which was written in Irish. The story is found in a
prose text preceded by a poem which seems to summarise its main events.
Although one could argue that poem and prose form a unity (see below,
1.1), there is no *communis opinio* about this, which is why I will distin-
guish between the poetry and prose version of EFmL.

    Central to this chapter is the prose version, which is dated to the 8th
century (Binchy, 1952, p. 45). First, the context and the classification of
the text will be treated (1.1); then, the prose version will be summarised
(1.2.1) followed by quotation of the whole poem (1.2.2), because the latter
is too complicated to paraphrase. Subsequently, the monster will be
analysed (1.3). As mentioned in the Introduction I will also advert to some
relevant concepts from the early Irish world view in this section. This
chapter ends with a summary and some conclusions.

1.1 Context and classification of the text

The first monster to be dealt with occurs in a text about King Fergus mac
Leite. It is to be found in the large compilation of law texts known as the
Senchus Már, 'the Great [Legal] Tradition[39]'. The story seems to owe its
transmission to the fact of its introduction into *Cetharślicht Athgabálae*,
'The Four Classes of Distraint', which is a long juridical tract on
athgabáil, 'distraint'. Only the poem is actually in *Cetharślicht*

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[37] Following Ruairí Ó hUiginn's (1993, p. 35) demonstration of the first *e* in the
third element in Fergus mac Leite's name being short, I adopted this as against
Daniel A. Binchy's positing of the long *e*.
[38] The poem at the beginning of the text survives in: Harl 432, BL, f. 4b, 16th
century, and H.3.17 (1336), TCD, cols. 398-9 and col. 26 f., 15th-16th centuries.
There are some excerpts in H.3.18 (1337), TCD, p. 363b, 16th century (Binchy,
1952, pp. 45-6). The prose tale exists in two of these manuscripts: H.3.18, pp.
363b-365a, and Harl 432, f. 5 (Binchy, 1952, pp. 34-5). The text was edited and
translated by Binchy (1952). See also Binchy (1978, II, pp. 352-5 (Harl 432); III,
pp. 881-3 (H.3.18); V, pp. 1665-6, 1897 (H.3.17).
[39] Cp. Mac Cana (1980, p. 23): "*Senchas* relates to the adjective *sen* 'old' and
embraces all of traditional knowledge: law, genealogy and historical lore whether
in prose or verse".

Athgabálae; the prose tale is on a leaf inserted later in manuscript Harley 432. Both poem and prose occur in H.3.18, a manuscript in which glossed extracts from the *Senchus Már* are to be found. The poetry and prose are connected with the procedure of claiming land that has been given up earlier as compensation.

Different views have been expressed on both the date of the text and the relation between the prose and the poem. The protagonist of the prose is Fergus mac Leite (the son of Leite/Let[40]), whereas the poem mentions Fergus Ferglethech (either: 'the grass-grazing one[41]' or 'the manly warrior[42]'). Thurneysen (1921/79, pp. 539-40) follows Henri d'Arbois de Jubainville (1895, II, pp. 13-4; 1903, pp. 460-1), who says that the glossators identified the Fergus of the poem with the Fergus mac Leite mentioned in Ulster regnal lists. The glossators then constructed the prose tale in order to explain the difficult poetry. Thurneysen furthermore refers to two other texts that touch upon the story given in the prose version: a 10th-century poem about the deaths of some Irish heroes called *Aidheda forni do huaislib Erenn*, 'The Deaths of some of the Nobles of Erin' (Stokes, 1902), and an entry in the *Annals of Tigernach* (for more about these texts, see 1.3.2). He dates the prose tale to the 11th century (1921/79, p. 668[43]). Binchy (1952, p. 35), however, points out that Thurneysen based his opinion of the date of the prose on the text in Harl 432. According to Binchy (*ibid.*), the extant text in this manuscript is indeed to be dated to the 11th century but the language of the prose in H.3.18 is Old Irish (*ibid.*, pp. 44-5). Binchy (*ibid.*, p. 45) is furthermore of the opinion that the poem and the prose relate the same story.

Binchy dates the poem to the 7th and the prose to the 8th century (*ibid.*, p. 45). However, recent studies of this type of *rosc* ('a short poem, ode or chant; a legal maxim or award') material would leave open the 8th century as a serious possible date for the poem (see McCone, 1990, pp. 43-4), which would make the poem contemporaneous with the prose.

One could read the poem supplementing the facts from the prose and in this way agree with Binchy. If prose and poetry are contemporaneous they could have belonged together, in which case one should combine their data. As there is no conclusive evidence of this, however, it is important to note the differences between prose and poetry. The poem lacks certain important elements, including the monster. There is one word in the poem which has been connected with the monster: *finech*. What is meant by

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[40] See Ó hUiginn (1993, p. 35).

[41] D'Arbois de Jubainville (1903, p. 460) and Thurneysen (1930, p. 103) take this name as Fér-glethech and translate it as *"mangeur de pré"* and *"der Gras-Abweidende"* respectively.

[42] This is Binchy's translation (see 1.2.2).

[43] It should be noted that Thurneysen (1921/79, pp. 20-1) assigns a later date to the above mentioned 10th-century poem. He rejects the authorship of Cináed úa Artacáin (†975) and says that it cannot have been written before the 12th century. However, Gerard Murphy (1952, pp. 151-6) shows that the ascription to Cináed is correct.

finech is not clear. In Harl 432 two explanations of the word are given in the glosses. Someone inserted "*.i. forcend*" (Binchy, 1978, II, p. 354, l. 18), 'i.e. end', above the word *finech*. Another gloss reads: "*.i. for sinig loca rudraide; l is and tainic finis, crich, a bais i lloch rudraige acint sinig*" (*ibid.*, ll. 16-8), 'i.e. on the *sinech*, 'the teated one', of Loch Rudraige; or it is there that the *finis* (the Latin word for 'end, death'), end in (lit.: of) his death in Loch Rudraige came about by/at the *sinech*'. The glossators explained thus the word as 'end' and as an alternative name for the monster. It seems likely that *sinech* is a name made up later as explanation for the unfamiliar *finech*, as Binchy (1952, p. 47) maintains. Both Harl 432 and H.3.18 read *finech*. At first, Binchy (1952, p. 47, n. 8) read *sinech* in H.3.17, but later (1978, p. 1897, l. 25) he edited *finech*, adding in a footnote: "cross-stroke of *f* now very faint" (*ibid.*, n. c). Therefore, *finech* seems to be the original word. Binchy (1952, p. 47) also dismisses the explanation 'end'. He sees the word as an adjective to loch and explains it as 'akin' to Fergus or 'belonging to the family' postulating the adjective from the noun *finechas*, 'the land and possessions held by a *fine*[44]; hereditary territory; kindred, descendants'. He points out that this noun can also be found in a gloss in H.3.18: "*finech .i. rogab finechus i loch rudraidhi (...)*" (*id.*, 1978, III, p. 882, l. 1), 'he acquired kin-land (*finechas*) in Loch. R. (...)' (*id.*, 1952, p. 47).

But if there is no monster in the poem, against whom or what did Fergus make his 'manly incursion' in Loch Rudraige (see 1.2.2)? Because of these uncertainties one cannot be sure whether the monster played a role in this version, which is why I shall deal mainly with the prose.

Fergus's adventure is used in *Senchus Már* as a precedent or 'leading case'. In this way the lawyers connected a legal institution with the archaic past, as they did with other references to both the Irish literary tradition and the Bible (Binchy, 1952, p. 48). At the same time the story about Fergus presents itself as a complete narrative, which could easily have existed independently of the law[45]. The text itself gives rise to this idea of independent existence because it shows that there were different versions extant. First, there is a different tradition on a magic gift of a dwarf (either herbs or a mantle; see 1.2.1); second, there is a variant version on Ogma (who might have been either Fergus's servant or his hound), where the text

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[44] *Fine* means 'a group of persons of the same family or kindred; progeny, descendants, a clan, tribe, race'.

[45] It should be noted here that even though according to Binchy (1952, p. 48) "the story about Fergus mac Léti had nothing whatever to do with the origin of the primitive legal remedy known to the Irish as *athgabáil*" a connection between law and narrative did exist. The story could serve as precedent or *casus* because a woman (together with land and valuables) was distrained. Without this woman the story loses its point.

breaks off[46] (see *ibid.*, pp. 38, 42).

Although the writing down of *Senchus Már* was carried out by lawyers who were well acquainted with both legal and Church matters and the compilation was supplied with a Christian frame (McCone, 1990, pp. 84-106), part of the material can be characterised as native Irish[47]. I would suggest that Fergus mac Leite's adventure belongs to this material. As argued, it could have been an independent story which might have existed before its inclusion in *Senchus Már*. Themes in it — for instance, *geis* and sacral kingship[48] — belong to the native Irish tradition.

One could classify the text either under the genre of *aittea* or *aideda*, 'death tales', or of *echtrai*, 'adventures/adventurous journeys'. The theme of the narrative in question is Fergus's adventure, which is why one could characterise it as one of the *echtrai*. At the same time, it is this adventure which leads to his death; therefore, the genre of the *aittea* or *aideda* could be considered as the appropriate classification as well. It should be noted that classifications are of course never absolute; often there are overlaps.

Apart from the theme, one has to consider the title of the text as it exists in the manuscript tradition. First, the oldest known title is *Echtra Fergusa maic Leiti*, occurring in one of the Middle Irish saga lists[49]. Second, a later version of the tale[50] has a built-in title at the end: "*imtechta tuaithe luchra ocus aided Fergus*", (O'Grady, 1892, I, p. 252) 'The journeys/adventures of the Luchra people and the death of Fergus[51]'.

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[46] The text indicates these two different traditions by 'Some say' (Binchy, 1952, p. 42, §5). The second variant tradition has been inserted in the middle of another sentence and is not present in Harl 432. It reads: "*Asberad araile dochuaid ogma lais gillae fergusa dia roscar fria coin 7rl*" (*ibid.*, p. 38), 'Some say that Ogma, Fergus's servant, went with him when he had parted from his hound, etc.' (*ibid.*, p. 42). Something similar is found in a gloss in the poetry version in H.3.18: "*(...) .i. aibinn ainm in gillai 7 ogma ainm in con*" (*ibid.*, p. 46), 'Aibinn was the name of the servant and Ogma was the name of the hound'.

[47] "It is, of course, highly likely that originally pagan elements found their way into this amalgam (...)" (McCone, 1990, p. 34).

[48] For more on these, see 1.3.3.

[49] It is found in List B (Mac Cana, 1980, p. 53): "*Eachtra Fergussa maic Lete*" (23 N 10); "*Ectra Fergusa mic Leiti*" (Rawl B 512); "*E. Fercuso maic Leide*" (Harl 5280).

[50] Thurneysen dates this text to the 13th-14th century. It is found in two manuscripts of the 15th-16th century: Egerton 1782, BL, fol. 30v. and Harl 432, BL, fol. 5 (Thurneysen, 1921/79, p. 541). In the second manuscript EFmL is also to be found. The later version is, because of its date, outside this study's scope.

[51] Standish Hayes O'Grady, who edited the text from Eg 1782 (1892, I, pp. 238-52) and translated it (II, pp. 269-85), translates this built-in title the other way around: 'Thus far the Death of Fergus and the Luchra-people's doings' (*ibid.*, II, p. 285). Compare Thurneysen's (1921/79, p. 541) translation: "*Die Wanderung der Tuath Luchra und Fergus' Tod*". O'Grady himself may have given the tale a 'new' title, as the text is headed in his book by: *Echtra ríg thuaithe luchra is lupracán go hEmhain agus fochonn báis Fherghusa mhic Léide ríg Ulad*, which he translates as 'The king of the Lepracanes' journey to Emania, and how the

In this later title the word *echtra* is absent and what happens to King Fergus is characterised by *aided*. In spite of this, I prefer to maintain the word *echtra* in the title[52] because, based on its occurring in the oldest known title, one might conclude that this tale was traditionally viewed as one of the *echtrai*.

The text, with as its main personage a king, the chief of the warriors, is a good example of a heroic text, either as *echtra* or as *aided*.

1.2 *Echtra Fergusa maic Leiti*. Summary

1.2.1 The prose version

The beginning of the story gives the initial stages leading up to the adventure. There is a war going on among the Féni, one of the peoples of Ireland. Three royal chiefs contend with each other: Conn Cétchathach, Conn Cétchorach[53] and Eochu Bélbuide. One of them, Eochu, has to go into exile and he stays with King Fergus mac Leite in Ulster for a long time. Then he returns to offer peace but is slain by six men: the son of Conn Cétchathach, four sons of Buide mac Ainmirech and Buide's grandson. The last one is the son of a foreigner (*deorad*) and Buide's daughter, Dorn (§1[54]).

The text proceeds with a difficult rhetoric section[55] dealing with the punishment of Dorn's son. He has to die or his mother must take the responsibility for him; the family will not support her[56]. Two ways are

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death of Fergus mac Léide king of Ulidia was brought about'. Gearóid Mac Eoin has kindly informed me that this title cannot be found in the manuscript. Incidentally, it is remarkable that when he edits *Luchra ocus Lupracán* O'Grady sometimes translates 'Lupra and Lupracan'. In the translation of his (?) title, he even omits the Luchra people.

[52] David Dumville characterises the central theme of *echtrai* as: "(...) that of a human being drawn on a journey to the otherworld" (1976, p. 73) and "the entry of the human hero into the supernatural world" (*ibid.*, p. 82). He contrasts it with the *immrama* for which the sea-voyages are a *sine qua non* whereas the journey is an unimportant aspect of the *echtrai* (*ibid.*, p. 79). He suggests that the extant version of *Echtra Fergusa maic Leiti* might be a summary of the original *echtra* and adds that a clear connection between Fergus and the 'Other World' is offered in the later version *Aided Fergussa* (*ibid.*, p. 92). For more about the 'Other World' see 1.3.3.

[53] In Harl 432 this name is not mentioned; the conflict is here between the two other men. The poetry version omits Conn Cétchathach (see 1.2.2). According to Binchy (1952, p. 39, §1, n. 2) the two Conns are identical.

[54] The division into sections is from Binchy's edition (1952).

[55] Harl 432 only gives the first line of this rhetoric section.

[56] This punishment seems to have the character of a compensation: one has to supply 'a body' to make up for the loss of another 'body'. The situation of Dorn's son differs from the other murderers. The others can compensate their crime by paying immovables and movables to the damaged party; the offspring of the foreigner, however, is condemned to death. The reason for this is that his father

suggested in which she might pay for his misdeeds: either by bondage for life or by being sent adrift in a boat[57] (§2).

This reflection on responsibility within the family precedes the events: Fergus arrives with his army to claim damages from the Féni as the killing of Eochu is in violation of the king's protection (díguin). After some negotiation Fergus receives in compensation[58] the woman Dorn, land, gold and silver (§3).

Peace has thus been concluded and Fergus returns with Dorn as his slave to Ulster. Probably during another expedition[59] Fergus falls asleep on the sea shore (for brú in mara) in the company of his charioteer Muena. Dwarfs (literally: lúchorpáin, 'little bodies') appear; they remove Fergus's sword and carry him towards the sea. When his feet touch the water he awakes and grabs three of them. One of the dwarfs says: "A life for a

belongs to another people and in early Irish law a foreigner (cú glas, 'grey dog') is not responsible for offences committed by his children (Kelly, 1988, p. 6). If the father is an alien the mother's kin is liable (ibid., p. 83). The father cannot and apparently the family does not want to pay for the foreigner's child. (Harl 432 offers an explanation: the child was begotten either against the wish or without the knowledge of the family; Binchy, 1978, II, p. 355 ll. 2-3; cp. p. 354 ll. 1-2.)

[57] Literally the text says: "cinged hi cumalacht ceim co nduiri fri saegalrith sir nochotacertmaim id laim lecther co .iii. mara muircrecha ar is frit forruich" (Binchy, 1952, p. 37), 'let her advance into bondage and servitude for the whole course of her life. Or I decide her case [thus]: that she (?) be left in thy hand [to be sent adrift] as far as three muirchrecha out to sea, for it is against thee she (?) has offended' (ibid., p. 39; a muirchrech might be "the distance at which a white shield on the shore is still visible"; ibid., p. 40. Cp. the suggestion of Pádraig Ó Fiannachta (1964-66, p. 78): muirc[h]reich may be an early compound of muir and crích meaning 'territorial water limit'). For a discussion of this punishment being Christian or perhaps having older roots, see Borsje (1993, pp. 222-6).

[58] The text refers to this amount as 'thrice seven cumala' (cumal means 'female slave', 'bondwoman', but it usually refers to 'a variable unit of value'; generally fixed at three milch-cows). The text of §3 is different in the manuscripts. H.3.18 ends with 7rl-, 'etc.', indicating that it omits something. The land given to Fergus is named differently in H.3.18 and Harl 432. Furthermore, in H.3.18 another possibility is suggested for the compensation: seven cumala for every hand that committed the crime. This would be 7 x 6 = 42, but the text goes on about the five persons involved. Dorn's son is again excluded. Harl 432 states that the gold, silver and land is given for the five 'natives' (.u.ir urrad) and Dorn for the son of the stranger (deorad) or Scottish man (Albanach).

[59] H.3.18 has: "IN tan ronainic fergus a methus luid docum mara sechis 7 a ara muena a ainm" (Binchy, 1952, p. 37), 'When he (lit.: Fergus, JB) had reached his domain he went on to the sea accompanied by his charioteer, whose name was Muena' (ibid., p. 41). The text from Harl 432 is slightly different: "Fecht naen ann iar sin luid fergus 7 a ara docum mara seicis" (ibid., p. 36), 'Some time after that, then, Fergus and his charioteer went (on) to the sea'.

life[60]" to which Fergus reacts by requesting to be granted three wishes (*drinnrosc*, 'wish, request, boon demanded[61]'; DIL adds that these wishes usually occur in return for quarter. Furthermore, the word is almost always accompanied by *tri*, though in some cases only one or two boons are subsequently specified. In the case of Fergus, the text refers to one boon). Fergus asks for a charm to go into seas, pools[62] and lakes. The dwarf gives him herbs to put in his ears or, according to another tradition, his mantle to wind around his head. He receives the charm but with one restriction[63]: he is not to go into Loch Rudraige, which is in his own territory (§§4-5)[64].

However, one day Fergus tries to go into the forbidden loch. He leaves his charioteer and chariot on the brink of the loch (*for brú in locha*) and the following takes place:

"A lluid fon loch	"When he dived under the lake[65]
con (f)aca[e] in muirdris and	he saw there a *muirdris* [see 1.3.1],
peist uiscide uathmar.	a fearful water-monster
ala nuair rosraiged in uair	which kept alternately inflating and
naili nosnimairced	contracting itself
amal bolg ngobenn.	like a smith's bellows.
La diuderc do fuire[66]	At the sight of it[67]
rosiapartha a beoil	his mouth was wrenched back
doa dib culadaib	as far as his occiput,
7 doluid as for tir ar omon	and he came out on land in terror.
7 asbert fria araid	He said to his charioteer:
cia cuimacci[68].	'How do I appear to thee?'

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[60] "*anmain i nanmain*" (Binchy, 1952, p. 38). This is glossed *anacal* (see the *Dictionary of the Irish Language* (DIL; Quin, 1983) *s.v. anacul*), 'act of protecting, shielding; protection; act of sparing, giving quarter', in H.3.18. This word returns twice in §5 where it refers to a ritual introduced there in which the dwarf is again described as seeking quarter. In this context, the term *fír fer*, 'fair play', literally: 'the truth/justice of men', is also used. For more about this, see below.

[61] *Drinnrosc* is glossed *roga* (DIL *rogu*), 'the act of choosing; a choice, selection', in H.3.18. Binchy (1952, p. 41) gives two other glosses on this word from the same manuscript: first, "*tri hathchuingi*", 'three requests', second, "*tri hitchi*", 'three requests, petitions (...)'.

[62] Harl 432 omits the pools.

[63] This restriction seems to be a *geis*, although the text does not use this term (which is not unusual in early Irish literature; see 1.3.3).

[64] Harl 432 only gives the first line of §5 without indicating an omission.

[65] Literally: When he went under the loch (...).

[66] Harl 432 reads: "*la decsain do foriu*" (Binchy, 1978, II, p. 355, l. 16).

[67] Binchy (1952, p. 43) also gives a literal translation: "by his gazing at it" which he explains as "as a result of gazing it".

[68] Binchy (1952, p. 43) says that there are two options in translating *cia cuimacci*: first, 'how dost thou see me?' comparing it with the phrase "*co-acci in sluag*" ('how do you see the army?'; for more on this, see 1.3.3) in the great epic *Táin*

is olcc do gne[69]	'Ill is thy aspect',
ol int ara (...)"	said the charioteer (...)"
(Binchy, 1952, p. 38)	(*ibid.*, p. 42).

Muena advises him to go to sleep in order to cure this deformity of his face, which Fergus does (§6).

During Fergus's sleep the charioteer reports the adventures (*imthechta*) of the king to Emain Macha. He asks the wise ones (*gáith*) of Ulster which new king they will take, as a king with a blemish cannot rule[70]. However, they decide differently: first, the king should return to his house; second, certain people — the 'common' people (*doéscar-slúag*), jesters (*drúith*) and fools (*óinmiti*) — who would comment upon the blemish of the king should be removed from the house; and third, the king should always have his head washed while lying on his back so that he might not see his face mirrored in the water. The king lives in this manner for seven[71] years (§7).

One day he tells Dorn to wash his head. Because he thinks she is too slow he gives her a blow with his horse-switch (*echlasc*). Resentfully she taunts him with his deformity. With his sword he cuts her in two. Immediately after this he goes into Loch Rudraige and has a fierce fight with the monster (§8):

"imeso. IAr suidiu	"Thereupon he turned away
[read: Im-soí iar suidiu[72]]	
co luith fa(n) loch rudraidhi	and went under Loch Rudraige;
laa co naidche[73] rofich in loch	for a whole day and night the loch seethed from [the contest between]
dib 7 in muirdris	him and the *muirdris*
co tiged a tonngar for tir.	and the surge of its waves kept coming on to the land.
do(t)luids<u>iu</u>m iarom co mbui	Eventually he emerged
forsan loch	on the surface of the loch,
7 cend na piasta	holding the head of the monster,

Bó Cúailnge, 'The Cattle Raid of Cúailnge' (TBC; Recension I of TBC — edition and translation: O'Rahilly, 1976a — is dated to the 11th century; the Book of Leinster (LL) version — edition and translation: O'Rahilly, 1967 — to the 12th; Thurneysen, 1918, p. 282); second, reading it as *cia-comci* (from *com-ad-ci-*), 'what dost thou inspect', meaning: 'what is thy opinion' relating it to the inspection or examination of a patient. This question is absent in Harl 432, which also omits other words and phrases in this section.

[69] Harl 432 reads: "*ní maith do gne*" (Binchy, 1978, II, p. 355, l. 17), 'not good is your appearance'.

[70] This remark refers to *fír flatha*, 'the word of a prince; justice of a ruler', and the institution of sacral kingship, see 1.3.3.

[71] Harl 432 reads: three years.

[72] See Binchy (1952, p. 39).

[73] The period of the fight is absent in Harl 432.

conidnacatar ulaid	so that the Ulaid (the people of Ulster, JB) saw him,
7 is<u>ber</u>t friu meisi is tiugba olse.	and he said to them: 'I am the survivor'.
focairt fai iarum marb	Thereupon he sank down dead,
7 ba <u>der</u>g in loch dib co c(o)enn mis"	and for a whole month the loch remained red from [the battle between] them"
(Binchy, 1952, pp. 38-9)	(*ibid.*, pp. 43-4).

The story ends with the following quatrain[74] (§9):

"Fergus mac leidi in ri(g)	"King Fergus, son of Léte
luid i f<u>er</u>tus rudraigi	Went on the sandbank of Rudraige;
huath do[d]narfas fa ga<u>nn</u> (n)gle	A horror which appeared to him — fierce was the conflict —
ba he fochond a ainme"	Was the cause of his disfigurement"
(Binchy, 1952, p. 39)	(*ibid.*, p. 44).

This quatrain mentions *Fertas Rudraigi*[75]. *Fertas* means a 'raised bank or ridge of earth or sand (generally of a bar or shallow near the sea-shore or a ford in a river; common in place names)' (DIL *s.v.* 2. *fertas*). Edmund Hogan (1910, p. 414) says about this place name: "**f. rudraige**; (...) prob. the passage betw. the inner and the outer bay at Dundrum, c. Down, *Fertas* signifying a ford, crossing, or passage; L. Rudraige was the old name of the inner bay of Dundrum". Binchy (1952, p. 42) also identifies Loch Rudraige as Dundrum Bay, and the *fertas* as the large sandbank that separates the inner and outer bay. The interpretation of Hogan seems to make more sense if one considers the place of action mentioned in the prose (Fergus goes *under* water and eventually surfaces) and poetry version (Fergus goes *into* the loch, see below). The phrase in the quatrain should perhaps be translated: 'Fergus mac Leite the king went into the Ford of Rudraige'. Fergus went into the water; he did not stay on the dunes that separate the two bays. He may have entered and come out of the water in the place where the two bays come together, which is probably a higher place compared with the two bays and lower than the dunes (and underwater). Was the inner or outer bay meant by Loch Rudraige? The outer bay is much deeper, and is in fact part of the sea. In order to enter such a deep loch one needs a charm. For the inner bay one might wait till ebb and perhaps even see what is in 'the depths'. More research is needed to draw

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[74] According to Binchy (1952, p. 44), this "quatrain is doubtless later than the prose".

[75] This might stand for *Fertas Locha Rudraigi* and could be a case of omission of the generic in place names occurring "after a preceding associated noun or proper name" (Baumgarten, 1990, p. 119). However, as no examples of this (full) place name appear to be extant, this remains a tentative suggestion.

a conclusion about this. It seems, however, that some place near the entrance to the inner bay is eligible. This was probably a dangerous place (because of the tides?) as it is mentioned in the *Annals* as a place of drowning (see below).

The quatrain is, furthermore, the second of two poetry sections in the prose, which are introduced by 'Of this was sung': "*is de rocett*" (§2: the rhetorical passage) and "*is desom rocet*" (§9: this quatrain). One should not confuse this poetry with the poetry version, which precedes the prose in the manuscripts and will be treated now.

1.2.2 The poetry version

The transfer of land is clearly central to the poem: first it is Conn's possession; then Fergus gets hold of it; and finally it falls to the hands of Conn's heirs again. In the middle of the poem the tragic fate of Fergus and Dorn is alluded to.

"Tír boíe (?) Chuind chétchoraig | "Land which belonged to Conn of the hundred treaties (?),
asa-ngabtha ilbenna | out of which many horned beasts (lit. 'horns') were [afterwards] seized,
bertai Fergusa ferglethech | Fergus the manly warrior (?) took it
i ndígail a thromgreise | as atonement for the grievous outrage
di guin Echach bélbuidi. | done to him by the slaying of Eochu of the yellow lips.
Brethae Dorn i n-ansoíri, | Dorn was brought [by him] into captivity;
do-cer inna fírinni | she perished on account of the truth[76]
seiches i ngnúis Fergusa. | which she uttered in Fergus's face.
Ferais Fergus ferfechtas | Fergus made a manly incursion
finech i lloch Rudraige | into the tribal (?) loch of Rudraige[77],
dia-marbad i márchinta. | as a result of which he was killed for

[76] Literally: she fell in her truth.
[77] Following John Carey (1988a, p. 123), Watkins (1995, p. 442, n. 1) connects Fergus with *finech* and translates: "Fergus of the kindreds made a manly incursion in Loch Rudraige (...)" (*ibid.*, p. 442). Watkins does not return to why Fergus would be called *finech*, 'of the kindreds', in an explicit way. It is true that family ties play a part in EFmL, but this aspect seems to be of more importance to Dorn than to Fergus. Carey has let me know that he thinks that *finech* would be an epithet appropriate to any king as a dynastic ancestor (real or potential). It might be, however, that the word *finech* has a function in EFmL. I will, therefore, maintain Binchy's translation and suggest an explanation for the loch being called *finech* (see 1.3.3). (I am grateful to Calvert Watkins for sending me the chapter about EFmL from his forthcoming *How to Kill a Dragon. Aspects of Indo-European Poetics.*)

Taisic a tír immurgu
fo selba Cuind comorbae"
(Binchy, 1952, p. 46)

[his] grave wrongdoing.
The land, however, reverted
to the estates of Conn's heirs"
(*ibid.*).

Remarkable here is the fact that no extraordinary encounters appear to be present in the poem: neither the dwarfs nor the monster are mentioned. Just as in the prose a connection seems to exist between the loch and Fergus: here it appears to be a loch connected with his *fine* (family, people); in the prose it is in his territory. In the poem the king's death is a punishment, perhaps for the killing of Dorn or for going into the loch? Unfortunately, many questions to which this poem gives rise remain unanswered. Some important aspects, however, seem to indicate that the poem tells the same story as the prose version. The truth, which is a central element in the story, is connected with Dorn's death, which is in line with what we know from the prose. Fergus's face is alluded to in the same sentence. On the whole it seems highly likely that prose and poetry form a unity.

1.3 The monster

A single monster plays a part in EFmL. Its name and appearance will be dealt with in this section (1.3.1); monsters with similar aspects in other texts are described in a search for sources and variant versions (1.3.2); the relation of the monster with evil is analysed (1.3.3) and, finally, a study of how the danger was overcome or neutralised is made (1.3.4).

1.3.1 The monster's appearance

There is one kind of monster which is a water monster called *muirdris*, *píast uiscide*, 'water beast, water monster', and *úath*, 'fear, horror, terror; a horrible or terrible thing'. It inflates and contracts in a manner which is compared with the movements of a smith's bellows. The beast is *úathmar*, 'dreadful; terrifying; terrible, horrible, awful, direful'; the sight of it causes fear (*omun*) and the monster is apparently huge as waves wash across the shore because of the fight.

The exact translation and meaning of the word *muirdris* are not clear. It seems most likely to be a compound consisting of *muir*, 'sea', and *dris*, 'bramble, briar, thorn-bush'. The first part (*muir*) could be seen in the light of the general identification of Loch Rudraige as Dundrum Bay (see above, 1.2.1), a sea-inlet that consists of an inner and outer bay. The second part (*dris*) is more difficult to understand. Does this mean a sea monster with the appearance of a thorn-bush, perhaps having stings? Several opinions have been expressed on this. According to Binchy (1952, p. 43), *dris* may be identical with *drisiucc*, which he sees as a hypocoristic form of *dris* and *cú*. This would result in something like: sea-thorn-(bush-) dog, which remains a vague speculation. Carney (1955/79, p. 98, n. 1) asserts that *muirdris* means 'sea serpent'. I do not know how he arrives at

dris = serpent. The usual word for 'serpent' is *nath(a)ir*. Furthermore, he claims that the *muirdris* is a poisonous animal (*ibid.*, p. 125) but there are no grounds for this in the text. This probably stems from Carney's interpretation of the word as a serpent (and, in any case, not all serpents are poisonous).

Calvert Watkins (1995, p. 447) rejects two of these suggestions, first *dris* as word for 'bramble, briar', commenting: "the creature is not a sea urchin". (Watkins may be right, but how does he know this?) Second, he rejects Binchy's solution taking *dris* as the first element of the name of a poetic grade (*drisiuc*). Watkins's view is that *dris* is a word for 'dragon' and he bases this upon similarities between Greek and Irish. The Greek word δράκων, 'dragon, serpent', is connected in antique etymology[78] with the verb δέρκομαι (aorist: ἔδρακον), 'to see (clearly)'. According to Watkins, some dragons in Greek tradition are said to be dangerous to look at. As an example, he refers to the Gorgon in *Pythian* X.46-8 (edition: Gildersleeve, 1890/1965, p. 116; translation: Bowra, 1969, p. 23) by Pindar (518 — *c.* 438). In this text Watkins sees two specimens of the above-mentioned[79] Indo-European formulas connected with the dragon-slayer myth. An aspect of the encounter with the *muirdris* in EFmL is that seeing it (expressed by the verbal form *diuderc*) is dangerous. Watkins comes to the following conclusion:

"I suggest that in the second element of the Old Irish compound *muir-dris*, 'sea-*dris*' we see a cognate of the Greek word δράκων 'dragon, serpent'. The zero-grade of the root is common to both, **dr̥k̑* > Greek *drak-*, Celtic *drik-*. A suffixed form **dr̥k̑-si-* (or feminine **dr̥k̑-sih₂*) would yield precisely Primitive Irish **drissi-*, Irish *dris*.

Both branches then, Greek and Celtic, would attest both the verbal root **derk̑-* 'see' and a word for 'dragon, serpent' **dr̥k̑*. If the latter two should turn out not to be cognate—which I doubt—the folk etymology itself could be of Indo-European date, since the

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[78] See, for instance, Claudius Aelian (*c.* 175 — *c.* 235) who mentions the extraordinary capacity of (hearing and) sight of serpents/dragons in his *De natura animalium*, 'On the characteristics of animals', X.48 and XV.21 (Scholfield, 1959a, pp. 348-9; *id.*, 1959b, pp. 242-3). This etymology is based solely upon the similar words and not on facts: "*Dracones* — "*die scharf Sehenden*": *Das Auge gab unserem Fabelwesen seinen Namen. Der starre Blick, besonders der Schlangen, erweckt den Eindruck, sie könnten gut sehen — was allerdings, wie wir heute wissen, nicht der Fall ist. Er wird durch das Fehlen der Augenlider hervorgerufen, sie sind zu einer durchsichtigen, uhrglasartigen Hornbrille verwachsen*" (Ulrike Harde and Steffen Woas in: Reising, Stüber, 1980, p. 69). It should be noted that at least in Aelian there is no reference to the idea that it is dangerous to see a dragon/serpent. Watkins gives, unfortunately, no bibliographical reference in addition to his example of the Gorgon (whom I do not consider to be a dragon).

[79] See the Introduction.

danger of the sight of the dragon is found in both traditions, Greek and Irish" (Watkins, 1995, p. 447).

Unfortunately, this last statement is based upon only two examples: the Gorgon in Greek and the *muirdris* in Irish tradition. This is not a very solid base. Moreover, the definition of a dragon is somewhat problematic. It is evident that Watkins works with a broad definition of the term 'dragon' as he applies it even to the Gorgon, who is a supernatural woman with snake hair. Such a broad view of the concept of 'dragon' enables one apparently to see the *muirdris* as such a specimen. As I am not competent to judge his etymology of *dris*, I must leave that to others who are. However, arguing from the descriptions of dragons, of which a serpentine aspect is usually a part[80], I can see no clear evidence in the portrayal of the *muirdris* for calling it a dragon. Therefore, I prefer to classify it with the more general term of 'monster'.

The literary tradition[81] also offers other names for the beast: first, *muirgris*, which is found in a gloss in Harl 432 (Binchy, 1978, II, p. 354, l. 19) but, according to Binchy (1952, p. 43), this is a mistake. This is presumably due to the Early Modern Irish collapse of d(h) and g(h) as /ɣ/ with resultant spelling confusion[82].

Second, there is the word *sinech*, which in the later version (O'Grady, 1892; see 1.1) becomes the name of the monster instead of *muirdris*. As mentioned above, the word can only be found in later glosses (in a gloss on the poetry version in Harl 432 and in a gloss on a later variant version, see 1.3.2) and can therefore be left aside here.

To sum up, the monster consists of the following aspects: it is called *muirdris* and a water monster (*píast uiscide*) (1); it lives in a loch which has been identified as an inlet of the sea (*muir*) which has two bays (2); it might look like some bush with body parts like branches, which might carry bristles or stings (*dris*) (3); it expands and contracts (4); it is dangerous to look at (5); it is huge (6) and — being called both *úathmar* and *úath* — horrible (7).

1.3.2 Sources and variant versions

Both external and Irish texts will be presented in this section on sources and variant versions (and in the following two chapters). Monsters that share aspects with the *muirdris* from canonical and non-canonical scripture, Isidore's *Etymologiae*, Hiberno-Latin, Old and Middle Irish texts will be described.

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[80] See Burkolter-Trachsel (1981, pp. 2-3).

[81] The editors of *Ancient Laws of Ireland* gave the monster a new name as well: *sphiron*; Binchy (1952, p. 47) shows that this is the consequence of a misreading by O'Curry, which the editors took over as a name for the monster (Neilson Hancock, O'Mahony and others, 1865, p. 68, n. 2).

[82] I am indebted to Kim McCone for this explanation.

As the etymology of *muirdris* is uncertain, it is not possible to look for its Latin equivalent in **the Vulgate**. The designation *úath*, 'terror', is too general for a search like this. However, *píast uiscide* is a good clue for a search for its Latin equivalent *bestia aquatilis*.

In the Vulgate, *bestia* generally refers to wild animals on earth. Obviously, only beasts living in water are relevant here. Four instances of this kind of animal are to be found in the Vulgate. In three cases sea beasts are involved. First, there is a general reference to beasts (*bestiae*), animals and monsters (*beluae*) that live in the sea (Sir 43:27, quoted in 2.3.2.1). This verse is in this context too general to draw any conclusion from. Then there are two texts that describe apocalyptic monsters which are rising from the sea: four large beasts in Dn 7:3 and the beast from the sea in Apc 13:1. The description of these monsters is very different[83] from the *muirdris*; therefore, these monsters do not come into consideration as possible sources. The final example might refer to a beast living in a river: PsH 67:31 mentions *bestia calami*, 'the beast of the reeds', but this seems to be a metaphor for leaders and warriors (Day, 1985, p. 120[84]).

There is another sea beast in the Vulgate that deserves some attention here: the mythical sea monster *par excellence*, Leviathan. It is not referred to as *bestia* but does share some aspects with the *muirdris*. Concerning the second aspect, Leviathan lives in the sea (Iob 40:20; 41:22; PsH 73:13-14; 103:26; Is 27:1). There is no explicit reference to its hugeness (6[85]) but this characteristic seems to be basic to the long speech that God delivers to Job about Leviathan (Iob 40:20-41:25[86]) where the monster is impressively described. In an ironic way God challenges Job to catch Leviathan like a fish (Iob 40:20) or to tie the monster like cattle (Iob 40:21) or a bird (Iob 40:24). This series of challenges ends in a climax:

"Pone super eum manum tuam	Lay your hand upon it
memento belli	Remember the battle
nec ultra addas loqui"	and speak no more
(Iob 40:27).	

The battle (or war) that God refers to here is probably the primeval combat between God and Chaos. Chaos is sometimes represented by monsters (and

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[83] The fourth beast in the *Book of Daniel* has one aspect in common with the *muirdris*: it is terrible (*terribilis* in Dn 7:7; *terribilis nimis* in Dn 7:19). This similarity alone, however, is insufficient basis for comparison. Monsters are usually terrible. See also 3.3.2.5 for these monsters from the *Book of Daniel* and the *Apocalypse of John*.

[84] For this metaphor in general, see Miller (1970). The primeval monster Behemoth is also described as a beast living in reeds and moist places in *Iob* (40:16; in the Hebrew text this is Job 40:21). Day (1985, p. 120) argues against an identification of the beast from the *Psalm* with Behemoth.

[85] The numbers between brackets indicate the aspects of the *muirdris* mentioned in 1.3.1.

[86] In the Hebrew text this is Job 40:25-41:26.

also by the waters; see Day, 1985, *passim*). This fight may be either cosmological — taking place at the beginning of Time or occurring as a recurring theme (probably combined with the turn of the seasons) — or eschatological — as the final combat at the end of Time. The motif of the divine combat with monsters (and the waters) has also been historicized (see *ibid.*, pp. 88-140); here the monsters have received a symbolical layer in which they have become a metaphor for hostile foreign rulers or nations. The result of this combat also has different versions: the monster is either killed or constrained. In God's speech to Job, it is clear that Leviathan is still alive, but the *Psalms* refer to the crushing of the heads of the dragons and Leviathan in the sea (PsH 73:13-14). The eschatological combat is referred to in Is 27:1 where it says that God will kill Leviathan with his sword[87]. The final aspect (7) — being horrible — also applies to Leviathan. Again in God's speech to Job, Leviathan is described as utterly frightening. Leviathan appears to be the most awful living being. No power on earth can be compared with Leviathan, who was made to fear no one. Seeing everything on high, Leviathan is king over all the children of pride (Iob 41:24-25).

There are thus three aspects that the *muirdris* and Leviathan have in common. Moreover, the *muirdris* is killed in water by a man using his sword and Leviathan is in some traditions also killed in water by God — in the cosmological *Psalm* tradition its heads are crushed and in the eschatological *Isaiah* tradition God's sword is referred to. Can one therefore conclude that the biblical Leviathan was used as a source for the *muirdris*?

Although the more general characteristics are shared, the more specific ones of both *muirdris* and Leviathan are not. The similarity of both monsters being killed (with a sword) is significant. I believe this to be a form of the above-mentioned general theme of a fight between a God/hero and a monster as can be found in Semitic and Indo-European texts (see the Introduction). But at the same time, the similarities are too general for further conclusions to be drawn from them. Therefore, I do not believe that the biblical image of Leviathan was used as a source of inspiration for the description of the *muirdris*.

In sum, there is no example to be found in the Vulgate after which the *muirdris* might have been modelled.

A search for water monsters in **non-canonical scripture** via the Latin term *bestia* and its Greek equivalents θήρ and θηρίον only gave references to wild animals[88]. (This does not mean that these texts do not describe water monsters, but the concordances and indices give no access to them.) The

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[87] In Apc 12:7-9 the Archangel Michael with his angels will deliver the final combat with the archenemy, there the great red dragon and its angels.

[88] I have used the concordances of Denis, Janssens (1987) and Lechner-Schmidt (1990). My references to chapter and verse numbers have been taken from the collections of translations in Charlesworth (1983 and 1985) and Schneemelcher (1904/87 and 1904/89).

only exception is found in the *Lives of the Prophets* which mentions 'beasts (θῆρες) of the waters' but it is argued that vipers are meant by it (for more about this text, see 2.3.2.1 and 2.3.2.4).

Another word for water monster is *cetus*. A survey will be given in 2.3.2.1; here it suffices to state that there is no relation with the *muirdris* either on the basis of designation or on that of the contents of the description.

The three aspects of Leviathan in the Vulgate mentioned above, which it shares with the *muirdris*, can also be found in the Pseudepigraphs. Leviathan is said to live in the sea (2). *I Enoch* (2nd c. BC — 1st c. AD), an Ethiopic text of which a fragment in Latin is extant (E. Isaac in Charlesworth, 1983, p. 6), describes that the monster Leviathan is separated from the monster Behemoth "in order to dwell in the abyss of the ocean over the fountains of water" (I En 60:7); and that Leviathan is cast "into the abysses of the ocean" (I En 60:9). Similar information is given in *IV Ezra* (late 1st c. AD), of which several manuscripts in Latin are extant (B.M. Metzger in Charlesworth, 1983, p. 518). In this book it is told that God kept Behemoth[89] and Leviathan in existence on the fifth day of the Creation[90]. After the separation of the two monsters Leviathan is given the seventh part of the earth to live in: the waters (IV Ezra 6:49-52). According to the Syriac apocalypse *II Baruch* (early 2nd c. AD), Leviathan will come from the sea in the time of the Messiah (II Bar 29:4). The Slavonic *Apocalypse of Abraham* (1st — 2nd c. AD) describes Leviathan as lying in the sea (ApcAb 21:4), and the Slavonic *Ladder of Jacob* (*c.* 1st c. AD) mentions Leviathan 'the sea dragon' (LadJac 6:13). Furthermore, Leviathan is large (6), according to II Bar 29:4. Finally, the beast is horrible (7), for instance the Angel Iaoel, who introduces himself to Abraham, describes as one of his tasks: "I am appointed to hold the Leviathans, because through me is subjugated the attack and menace of every reptile" (ApcAb 10:10). The danger Leviathan presents involves the whole world: "And I saw there the sea and its islands, and its cattle and its fish, and Leviathan and his realm and his bed and his lairs, and the world which lay upon him, and his motions and the destruction he caused the world" (ApcAb 21:4).

When one compares these descriptions with the characteristics of the *muirdris* the same image as that of Leviathan in the OT arises. As said before, this overlap between Leviathan and the *muirdris* is insufficient basis for an identification. In sum, there are no clues to trace the *muirdris* to non-canonical scripture.

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[89] The text of the Vulgate version of *IV Ezra* reads here 'Enoch'; 'Behemoth' is given as a variant reading in some manuscripts. I am indebted to Johan Vos who pointed this out to me. When I refer to *IV Ezra*, I take the information from Charlesworth (1983).

[90] In *II Baruch* the two great monsters Behemoth and Leviathan are said to be created on the fifth day (II Bar 29:4).

By *bestiae* **Isidore** means wild beasts (*Etymologiae* XII.1.4), on which he writes in Book XII.2. Here, he mainly deals with land animals, although he also pays attention to the griffin (XII.2.17). One beast is described that is able to live in a river: the *enhydros* (XII.2.36). But this is a very small beast (*bestiola*) which is why it cannot be connected with the *muirdris*[91].

In the chapter on fish (XII.6) Isidore also uses *bestiae* to refer to wild animals on the land (XII.6.4). The only time that *bestia* refers to water beasts is in XII.6.7, which deals with the whale (*ballena*). Whales are enormous beasts (*bestiae*), Isidore says, which can cause higher waves than the other sea beasts (*bestiae maris*).

There are two aspects that the *muirdris* and the whale have in common. They live in (sea) water (2) and cause (high) waves, which is explicitly connected with its huge size (6) in the case of the whale. However, I do not think that there is a direct relation between these two kinds of beast. The whale[92] does not share more important characteristics with the *muirdris* like, for instance, the expanding and contracting. Therefore, Isidore's information on water beasts cannot be considered a source for the *muirdris*.

Two **Hiberno-Latin texts** give instances of relevant forms of *bestiae*. First, there is a reference to a *bestia* living in water in a text which is probably older (completed between 679 and 704; see 2.1) than EFmL and which is central to chapter 2: *Vita Sancti Columbae* (VC) by Adomnán. The second text is *Navigatio Sancti Brendani abbatis*[93] (NBA), which could be contemporaneous with EFmL (see above, footnote 31).

I would like to refer to chapter 2, section 2 for a quotation of the episode from the first text, VC (II.27; Anderson, 1961/91, pp. 132-5). The monster that surfaces in the river Ness shares the following characteristics with the *muirdris*: (1) it is referred to by the Latin equivalent of *píast uiscide*: *aquatilis bestia*. The beast is also called *bilua*, 'beast, monster', which has no specific parallel in the Irish text. The second aspect — living in a loch which is an inlet of the sea or (double) bay — could perhaps be compared with the *bestia* being located in a river mouth, therefore near to the sea (see Thomas, 1988, p. 42; for more on this, see 2.3.2.3). There are no parallels for aspects 3-6 (3: branches/bristles/stings; 4: expansion

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[91] For more about the *enhydros*, see 2.3.2.5.

[92] D'Arbois de Jubainville (1903, p. 459) enumerates several sea monsters as mythological counterparts in Greek and Irish texts. He furthermore (*ibid.*, p. 461) explains the later form *sinech* as a she-whale: "They [the glossators, JB] changed the masculine *Finech* derived from *fine*, 'family', into a feminine *sinech* derived from *sine*, 'breast, nipple', and meant mammal, here probably a she-whale" ("*Ils changèrent le masculin Finech dérivé de fine 'famille' en un féminin sinech dérivé de sine 'mamelle' et signifiant mammifère, probablement ici baleine femelle*"). In a footnote (*ibid.*), however, he translates *sinech* as *vache*, 'cow'.

[93] The several versions of *Vita Sancti Brendani* will not be included in this study as they have not been confidently dated (see Sharpe, 1991, p. 24). Moreover, they seem to be late (*ibid.*, n. 89).

and contraction; 5: dangerous sight; 6: huge) but the aspect of the monster being horrible (7) is present in the Latin text as well: the beast causes extreme terror (*"nimio terrore perculsís"*) in people who see it approaching a swimmer.

In sum, the two beasts share three aspects of which the same designation (albeit in two different languages) seems to be the most striking. Despite this, I do not believe that VC's episode has been a source for EFmL. There are too many differences between the texts of which I name a few. Fergus knows nothing about a monster in the loch before he enters it; there is only the interdiction with no further information. In VC, the presence of the beast in the river is known to all present at the event: the episode starts with the mention of an earlier victim of it being buried. The man who 'meets' the monster in the water in the Latin text is not the one who 'fights' the beast as in the Irish text. Furthermore, the encounter is completely different: the fight with the *muirdris* is fought out in a bloody way with a sword ending in death; the 'fight' with the *bestia* is — compared with this — rather 'clean': St Columba raises his hand, invokes God and commands the beast to withdraw, which it does. There is neither blood nor death in this adventure of the saint[94].

The second text, NBA, gives three sections in which *bestia* occurs. First, a sea monster called Jasconius is described (§10). It is called *bestia* in §15 (1), lives in the sea (2), is huge (6) and frightens the companions of St Brendan (7). Second, when St Brendan and his companions sail the ocean they are suddenly attacked by another water monster (§16). This beast is called *bestia* (1) and *belua*. It lives in the ocean (2) and is of immense size (6: *"bestia immense magnitudinis"*). It causes waves of extraordinary height (*"unde mire altitudinis"*). The fear of Brendan's 'brothers' increases (*"magis ac magis timebant"*) as the monster approaches them (7). St Brendan prays for delivery and a fire-spitting monster arrives which kills the beast that attacks them[95]. The beast that attacks the voyagers shares the same aspects with the *muirdris* as Jasconius does. There is some similarity but too little to consider them either as sources or variant versions of the *muirdris*. Third, during their voyage Brendan *cum suis* arrive in a clear sea, where they can see all kinds of beast (*"diuersa genera bestiarum"*) in the deep under them (§21). Obviously, this has no relation with Fergus's adventure: first, the *muirdris* is a single beast, whereas in NBA §21 a multitude is described. Furthermore, had Fergus been able to see what was there in the depths of Loch Rudraige in advance, he might have (re-) acted differently. In any case, seeing the *muirdris* is closely linked with the distortion of the king's face whereas the brothers of Brendan, although they are terrified, do not suffer from any

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[94] One could compare the *muirdris*'s posited stings with those of small, dangerous ocean beasts that threaten to pierce a boat in VC II.42 (see 2.2), but the latter are small and swim at the water's surface, whereas the former is large and encountered in the deep. The differences between these two kinds of beast are too great.
[95] For more about this episode, see 2.3.2.1.

blemish on that account.

There is, however, a relation between the beasts in the clear sea and Jasconius. Jasconius always tries to bring its head to its tail, according to NBA §10. In §21 there are playful references to this: the beasts in the clear sea look like a community in a circle (*"ciuitas in girum"*); they lie in the depths bringing their heads to their posteriors (*"adplicantes capita ad posteriora iacendo"*). Later on the beasts start swimming in a circle around the boat (*"in circuitu nauis"*).

The image of a beast lying in a circle (around the world) with its tail in its mouth can be seen in the light of characteristics of Leviathan[96]. The idea of the circle is found in glosses on the *Psalms*. As was shown above, Leviathan is mentioned in PsH 73:14 and 103:26. *Psalm* 73:14 refers to the combat between God and Leviathan (PsH)/the dragon (PsG) in the sea. The *Psalm* text of Codex Palatinus Latinus 68 (edited together with the glosses by McNamara, 1986), an 8th-century text from an Irish or Northumbrian monastery[97], reads like PsG *draco*[98]. According to the gloss relevant here, God has destroyed the head of the great dragon that encircled the world. This was necessary in order to let humankind inhabit the world[99]. Hiberno-Latin and Irish glosses on the *Psalms* are also found in Codex Ambrosianus C 301, a manuscript from about the middle of the ninth century, which formerly belonged to the Columban monastery of Bobbio[100] (edition, and translation of the Irish glosses: Stokes, Strachan, 1901-3/75, I). Codex Ambrosianus gives the abbreviated version of Julian of Eclanum's (*c.* 380 — *c.* 455 AD) translation of Theodore of Mopsuestia's (*c.* 350 — 428 AD) commentary on the *Psalms*[101], called the *Epitome*, to which Irish glosses were added in the manuscript. The gloss in Latin on this verse does not give relevant information; for the Irish glosses in this manuscript, see below (*sub* Old and Middle Irish texts).

The other *Psalm* verse important here is 103:26. A gloss in the *Epitome* (Stokes, Strachan, 1901-3/75, I, p. 412) explains that by 'the dragon in the sea' Leviathan, spelled *Lebitan* is meant. Leviathan cannot live in the Mediterranean Sea, the text goes on, because of its size. It moves about in the Indian Ocean as if it is playing. A gloss with a similar contents, where Leviathan is spelled *Leuithan* and *Leuidan*, is found in

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[96] For more about the connections between Leviathan, Jasconius and other nameless huge sea monsters, see 2.3.2.1.

[97] See McNamara (1986, pp. 72-4).

[98] For the whole set of glosses on this dragon, see McNamara (1986, pp. 154-5). They refer to the complex symbolism of the dragon — foreign rulers — the Devil. I will here only deal with the aspect of the beast and the circle, but shall return to the former symbolism below (*sub* Old and Middle Irish texts).

[99] "(...) *CONFRIGISTI CAPUT DRACONIS magni qui circumiit mundum; nisi enim eum prae mortuo capite fecisses non potuissent homines habitare in terra*" (McNamara, 1986, p. 155).

[100] See Stokes, Strachan (1901-3/75, I, pp. xiv-xv).

[101] The standard edition of this work is done by Lucas de Coninck and Maria Josepha d'Hont (1977b).

Codex Palatinus Latinus (McNamara, 1986, pp. 214-5). Julian's text is the ultimate source of this idea, as McNamara (1986, pp. 48-51) has shown that the *Epitome* is among the sources of the text in this manuscript[102].

These glosses give another image of Leviathan, but again the similarity between this primeval monster and the *muirdris* is too small to be considered significant. All the two monsters share is being a water monster living in (a part of) the sea (2) and being huge (6).

Surveying the material from Hiberno-Latin texts, one can conclude that the monster in the river Ness from VC has some aspects in common with the *muirdris* (especially being called water monster), but the similarity is on the whole quite meagre. The characteristics of the sea monsters from NBA are too general in similarity: there is no direct relation between them and the *muirdris*. The same is true of the details about Leviathan as given in the glosses on the *Psalms*. The Hiberno-Latin texts do not come into consideration as sources for EFmL.

A relevant text about the beast and Fergus occurs as a Latin entry in Fragment I of the Irish AT[103]:

"Fergus mac Leti,	Fergus mac Leite,
qui conflixit contra bestiam	who fought against the beast
hi Loch Rudraige	in Loch Rudraige
et ibi demersus est,	and who was drowned there,
regnavit in Emain annis .xii."	ruled in Emain for twelve years
(Stokes, 1895, p. 404).	

The text does not give much information about the *muirdris*. It refers to the monster as a *bestia* (1). The beast is, as in EFmL, located in Loch Rudraige (2). Nothing is said about its appearance (3, 4, 6). The entry is not explicit about the danger it presents (5, 7). The text mentions the fight but not the monster's death. The cause of the king's death is drowning: did he lose his ability to travel under water? Was it the monster who drowned

[102] Codex Palatinus Latinus gives *mare Terrenum*, Codex Ambrosianus *media terranea maria* as the place too small for Leviathan. In Codex Ambrosianus an Irish gloss together with a Latin explanation is added to *terranea*: "*talmandai .i. quae sunt in medio terrae*" (Stokes, Strachan, 1901-3/75, I, p. 412), 'earthly/pertaining to the earth; that is: which are in the middle of the earth'. It seems likely that these expressions refer to the Tyrrhenian Sea or the Mediterranean Sea. *Media terranea* should then be taken as *mediterranea*, signifying the sea(s) between the three parts of the world as seen in early Medieval Ireland: Europa, Asia, and Africa. Another possibility would be the sea(s) under the earth or in the heart of the earth, but this would mean the Abyss which is vast and could easily be a dwelling place of Leviathan and is also sometimes mentioned as such (for instance, in I En 60:7, 9).

[103] Rawl B. 502, BLO, fol. 9b2. The manuscript is dated to the late 11th or early 12th century by R.I. Best (1914, p. 115) who distinguishes (at least) two hands. The entry here dealt with belongs to the part written by the second hand (B).

him?

The entry about Fergus is part of the first twelve pages of the *Annals of Tigernach* in Rawl B 502. These pages are in fact a "synchronic history of the kingdoms of the world, formed by adding an Irish section to the material taken over from the Eusebian Chronicle. It was forced into a false annalistic form, no doubt in order that it might be prefixed to a collection of Irish annals" (Mac Neill, 1914, p. 45). Eoin Mac Neill studied the growth of this text and assigns the 12th century to Fragment I (*ibid.*, p. 108), to which the entry about Fergus belongs. Therefore, the entry in AT is based upon and is a variant version of EFmL.

Monsters with similar aspects are present in the following **Old and Middle Irish texts**. I will first discuss Irish representations of Leviathan. This will be followed by a description of a text that mentions both Fergus and the monster. Thereafter I will deal with other monsters who share the first part of the compound *muirdris* (*muir-*). Then a monster that shares the second part (*-dris*) will be described. Finally, I will give examples of water monsters designated *bíast*.

Some glosses in Irish comment upon Leviathan as it is found in the *Psalms*. As mentioned above, Codex Ambrosianus C 301 explains the *draco* in Ps 73:14 as Leviathan, spelled *lebedan* (see Stokes, Strachan, 1901-3/75, I, p. 316). This Latin gloss is translated into Irish, but the information given is not relevant here. The comment in Latin on Ps 103:26 about Leviathan swimming in the Indian Ocean is glossed in Irish. The name of the monster is spelled *lebedán* and one of the glosses says: ".i. *a cobrigedar* .i. *a cluichigedar*", 'i.e. when he foams (?), i.e. when he sports' (*ibid.*, p. 412). These glosses give some parallels with the *muirdris*: living in the sea (2), being huge (6), and the causing of waves by the *muirdris* can perhaps be compared with the foaming that Leviathan is said to do here.

Another mention of Leviathan is made in one of the Old Irish poems of Blathmac son of Cú Brettan (edition and translation: Carney, 1964; the poems are dated to 750-770; *ibid.*, p. xiv). The second poem that is relevant here starts with "*A Maire, a grian ar clainde*", 'Mary, sun of our race' (*ibid.*, pp. 50-1), and refers to Leviathan, spelled *leuedhan*, in stanza 242 (*ibid.*, pp. 82-3). It is found in a part that deals with the Devil (stanzas 241-5) and it is obvious that the name Leviathan is used as one of the designations of the Devil[104]. Nothing is said about Leviathan's form,

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[104] Compare NBA §25, where the name Leviathan also refers to the Devil. (See 2.3.2.1.) Carney (1964, p. 150) suggests that Leviathan in Blathmac's poem is symbolic of either evil temporal powers or of the Devil. He refers to Ez 32:2 and the glosses on the *Psalms* in Codex Ambrosianus, where Leviathan is said to be the Pharaoh's name in the *Book of Ezechiel* (see Stokes, Strachan, 1901-3/75, I, p. 316. The explanation of the dragon as the Pharaoh and as the Devil is also found in the glosses from Codex Palatinus Latinus; see McNamara, 1986, pp. 154-5). In Ez 29:3 and 32:2 Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, is addressed respectively

therefore no comparison with the *muirdris* can be made. It is interesting to note, though, that this text gives a clear example of the name of a monster used as a name for the personification of moral evil.

The biblical primeval monster can also be found in a heroic text: *Togail Bruidne Da Derga*, 'The Destruction of Da Derga's Hostel' (TBDD; edition: Knott, 1936/63; translation: Stokes, 1901a; dated to the 11th century; Thurneysen, 1921/79, p. 627). In TBDD §56 a king hears a noise and makes a few suggestions for its cause; one of them is: "(...) *in Leuidan timchela in domuin [sic] ad-comaicc a erball do thochur in beatha tar a cheann* (...)" (Knott, 1936/63, p. 15), '(...) the Leviathan that surrounds the earth strikes with its tail to overturn the world (...)' (translation based upon Stokes, 1901a, p. 54). This is another instance of the image of the circle, to which I will return in 2.3.2.1. Here the comparison with the *muirdris* is central, giving only one relevant point: the hugeness of the monster (6).

The Middle Irish *In cath catharda*, 'The Civil War [of the Romans]' (edition and translation: Stokes in Stokes, Windisch, 1909; the text is dated *c*. 1100 or the beginning of the 12th century by Sommerfelt, 1920-21, p. 39), refers to Leviathan in a plural form. The beginning of the tale about the great battle of the Plain of Thessaly describes the situation. It is a horrible time: all the cave-doors of Hell in the land of Thessaly are opened on the night before the fight. On earth, dangerous wild beasts and demonic crowds gather; thunderbolts and fireballs are seen in the sky and the waters of the earth become wild: there are three tidal outbursts: of the Caspian, the Red and the Mediterranean seas. To the roar of the sea and the storm of the ocean the noise of the sea monsters is added:

"(...) garbconghair na mbledhmil

7 na muc mara 7 na ron
7 na rinnach, na tollcenn
7 na corrcenn, na milmór[105]

"(...) the rough clamour of the monsters
and the porpoises and the seals
and the *rinnaig*, the *tollchinn*
and the *coirrchinn*, the whales

as *draco magne*, '(you) great dragon', and *draconi qui est in mari*, 'the dragon that is in the sea'. This is indeed one of the examples where the symbolism of the dragon/water monster is applied to political enemies (see also Day, 1985, pp. 88-140), but this does not follow from what Carney (1964, p. 150) says: "It is doubtless Ezechiel's dragon that appears in *Togail Bruidne Da Derga* (...)". This text does in fact mention a Leviathan tradition (see below), but one cannot characterise this monster as 'Ezechiel's dragon'. I furthermore disagree with Carney's explanation of Leviathan in Blathmac's poem symbolising evil wordly powers. Stanza 242 deals with the punishment of the impious and the followers of the Devil, whereby Leviathan refers to the Devil. Moreover, two stanzas give two parallel designations for the Devil: Leviathan and the Devil in 242, and Lucifer and 'the Proud One' in 243.

[105] *Míl mór* literally means 'large beast'; Stokes and DIL translate 'whale(s)'. It should be noted, however, that DIL gives *cetus* as a gloss on *míl mór*, which is an argument for translating it as 'large (sea) beast(s)'.

7 na libedhan	and the leviathans,
7 ilpiast anaichni_dh_	and the many other unknown beasts
inn occiain arcena"	of the ocean"
(Stokes, Windisch, 1909, p. 324)	(*ibid.*, p. 325).

The *libedhan* are enumerated among other horrible, strange aquatic creatures. The text gives no specification of the outward appearance of the beasts, therefore no comparison with the *muirdris* can be made.

The Late Middle Irish homily XVI in Robert Atkinson's collection of passions and homilies (edition: Atkinson, 1887b, pp. 213-9; translation: *ibid.*, pp. 451-7) gives an enumeration of the chiefs appointed by God for several phenomena within the Creation; the Leviathan (*in lebedan*) is the chief among the fishes (sg: *bratán*; *ibid.*, pp. 219, 456). Again, although this remark will turn out to be of interest in connection with Jasconius (see 2.3.2.1), no comparison with the *muirdris* can be made, because the sermon offers no more details.

The last example of interest here is a Middle Irish poem about Sunday: *Dénaid cáin domnaigh Dé dil*, 'Observe ye dear God's Law of Sunday' (edition and translation: O'Keeffe, 1907b). This poem will receive more attention in the third chapter, because it is connected with the text treated there. There is one stanza (§24) dealing with Leviathan (quoted below, in 3.1). One can conclude from it that Leviathan swims quickly through the sea on weekdays and stays in one place on Sundays (see O'Keeffe, 1907b, pp. 145, 147). Like the above given examples, this text offers no clue for comparison with the *muirdris*. It is possible now to conclude that there is no basis in Old and Middle Irish texts to equate Leviathan with the *muirdris*; there is only some general similarity, and in this the texts in Irish are in line with the other sources mentioned above.

There is a stanza about Fergus mac Leite and the monster in the above-mentioned (see 1.1) Early Middle Irish poem called *Aidheda forni do huaislib Erenn*[106] (Stokes, 1902). It was written by Cináed úa Artacáin[107] (†975) and begins with *Fíanna bátar i n-Emain*, 'Warriors who lived in Emain'. The poem relates about the deaths of the heroes and/or where they were buried. The third stanza names the first one, who is Fergus mac Leite. Here follows the text from LL[108]:

"(Fer)_gus_ m_acc_ Léite ba laech	Fergus mac Leite was a warrior/ hero.
luid cosin m̃béist, ba bidg baeth,	He went to the beast — it was a

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[106] The text is found in the following manuscripts: LL = H.2.18 (1339), TCD, 31a-32, 12th century; Laud 610, BLO, fol. 74a, 15th century; and Eg 1782, BL, fol. 52a, 15th century.

[107] See Murphy (1952, pp. 151-6).

[108] Translation based upon Stokes (1902, p. 305). (For the text from Laud 610, see *ibid.*, p. 318, and from Eg 1782, see *ibid.*, p. 323.)

foolish/reckless attack[109] —

(co) torchratar [im]malle   so that they fell together
for Fertais ruáid Rudraige"   on the red Fertas Rudraige/
(Stokes, 1902, p. 304)   on the Fertas of red Rudraige[110].

Thus, Fergus is called a warrior/hero (*laech*) who went to the monster.
Nothing is said about the inducement or cause, but Fergus's act seems to
be disapproved of in the reference *ba bidg baeth*, 'it was a foolish/reckless
attack'. The deaths of both man and monster are referred to and the
location is specified as Fertas Rudraige. The stanza repeats this place name
from the final quatrain in the prose text of EFmL but uses the preposition
for instead of *i*. Another remarkable aspect in the stanza is the colour red.
There are three possible connections: first, it may refer to the colour of the
fertas, perhaps consisting of red(dish) water/sand. Second, the 'red' (*rúad*)
may refer to the remark in the prose version of EFmL where the Loch is
described as being red (*derg*) for a month, which was caused by the bloody
fight (see also Stokes, 1902, p. 331[111]). If this is meant, we should per-
haps read: 'on the *fertas* of red [Loch] Rudraige[112]'. Third, there might
also be an etymological connection with the first part of the name of the
loch: Rudraige, from *rúad*, 'red[113]'. It is not inconceivable that these

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[109] See DIL *s.v. bedg*, where 'attack' is given among the more general meanings.
Stokes (1902, p. 305) translates "*ba bidg baeth*" as: "'t was a silly start".
[110] The adjective 'red' may go with either *fertas* (a feminine noun; *rúaid* as a dat.
sg. fem.) or Rudraige (a masculine noun, taken as a personal name; *rúaid* as a
gen. sg. masc.).
[111] Dáithí Ó hÓgáin (1983, pp. 87-125; the article is in Modern Irish; there is an
English summary on pp. 120-5, which I have used) emphasises the line of the
concluding quatrain of EFmL in which it is said that the loch was red for a month
(*ibid.*, p. 121). Ó hÓgáin, moreover, points out that the author of the text
interprets the name Loch Rudraige as 'Red Lake'. It should be noted that there is
no explicit statement of this kind in EFmL. According to Ó hÓgáin, the motif of
a red lake should be traced to the Bible. He adduces traditions from *Exodus* about
Moses, who turns water into blood and leads his people through the 'Red Sea'
(*ibid.*, p. 122) and he adverts to the *Apocalypse*, with "a red lake (Apocalypse:
'fiery lake') as place of confinement" (*ibid.*, p. 124) of the dragon. I have pro-
blems with his line of reasoning: a loch which turns red from a bloody battle is a
motif different from water turned into blood by a supernatural act. The turning of
water into blood as found in Ex and the Apc should be seen in the context of
divine punishments: God bestows this power on Moses (Ex 7:17-25) or on
angels/witnesses (Apc 8:8; 11:6; 16:3-4). The pool of fire and sulphur, which
could be called red but has nothing to do with blood, in the Apc (Apc 19:20;
20:9-10, 14-15; 21:8) is likewise a form of divine punishment. These motifs are
highly different from the motif in EFmL. Although Ó hÓgáin has given an
impressive survey of material on monsters in lakes in Irish texts, his monolithic
approach to the theme gives rise to quite a few methodological objections. I leave
this further aside.
[112] See above, 1.2.1.
[113] See also Ó hUiginn (1993, p. 34), quoted below in 1.3.3.

three layers are present in this line[114].

The glosses give extra information: Fergus is called king of the Ulaid and *immalle* is explained as Fergus and the *bíast* (Laud 610; Stokes, 1902, p. 318). Furthermore, Fergus went <u>back</u> to the Sinech of Loch Rudraige (Eg 1782; *ibid.*, p. 323; about *sinech*, see above 1.1 and 1.3.1).

The poem is a variant version, obviously deriving from EFmL. About the monster the following can be said: it is designated *bíast* and the name *muirdris* has been replaced in one of the glosses by *Sinech* (1). The beast is located in Loch Rudraige (2). Neither the stanza nor the glosses give information about the way the monster looks (3, 4, 6). The danger that the monster represents might be present in the small sentence 'it was a foolish/reckless attack' (5, 7). This is the only variant version in Old and Middle Irish texts about Fergus mac Leite and the monster.

No other instance of *muirdris* than that in EFmL is found in Old and Middle Irish. There are, however, several monsters whose names also start with *muir*-: a *muirbech*, a *muiriasc*, and a *muirselche*. The *muirbech* is found in *Acallam na Senórach*, 'The Colloquy of the Ancients', (AnS; edition in O'Grady, 1892, I, pp. 94-233 and Stokes, Windisch, 1900, pp. 1-224; translation O'Grady, 1892, II, pp. 101-265 and Stokes, Windisch, 1900, pp. 225-71). This text was written at about the end of the 12th century; its language is Late Middle Irish (Dillon, 1970, p. ix). The word *muirbech* as a name for a monster is difficult to translate. The compound is given in DIL *s.v. murbach*, *muirbech* as 'a breakwater; a level strip of land along the sea coast'. On the other hand, if one compares this word with the *muirmíl* and *muirselche* treated here, considering the fact that aquatic beasts are named by analogy with terrestrial ones (for instance, sea horses, sea cows, sea elephants), it is interesting to note that the word *bech* means 'bee', which would result in the translation of *muirbech* as sea bee. However, a bee is not a terrestrial but a flying animal. Because it is not clear what was meant by *muirbech* I will leave the word untranslated.

The story in AnS (edition: O'Grady, 1892, I, pp. 147-8; Stokes, Windisch, 1900, pp. 68-9; translation: O'Grady, 1892, II, p. 163) consists of prose and poetry. In the prose the monster is designated *píast*[115], in the poem *muirbech*[116]. The story is an answer to a question of the king of Leinster (Eochaid Lethderg) who wants to know why Finn mac Cumaill

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[114] "The function of etymology within texts is either incidental/additive, constituent, or creative. (...) Uniqueness of etymology is not a postulate, so that one may find several different explanations even in the same text" (Baumgarten, 1990, p. 116).

[115] O'Grady (1892, II, p. 163) translates *píast* in this section in four different ways: 'reptile', 'worm', '*píast*', and 'creature'. I refer to it by the usual 'monster, beast'.

[116] I am indebted to Máirtín Ó Briain, who drew my attention to the *muirbech* in the poem.

and the *fianna*, a group of warriors outside society[117] led by Finn, had
not killed the monster of Glenn Ruis Enaigh (Valley of the Wood of the
Swamp/Marsh), whereas they had banished every other monster[118]
(*arracht*). First, the origin of the monster is told: it is the fourth part of
Mes Gegra's brain[119], which is swallowed by the earth and turns into an
enormous monster ("*peisd adbul[mor]*" in Stokes, Windisch, 1900, p. 68;
"*péisd adbal*" in O'Grady, 1892, I, p. 147, who translates 'a monstrous
worm'; *ibid.*, II, p. 163). Then it is said that it was not fated (*i ndán*) for
the *fianna* to slay this beast, but the *Táilchenn*, 'Adze-head[120]', would
come and a disciple of his *familia* who will tie the monster with a single
rush. The monster will remain tied until Judgment[121]. This being so, the
king wants to know why, then, the monster in that loch has killed *fianna*
and their hounds. It turns out that Finn had ended a relationship with a
woman (Uaine daughter of Modharn) from the *áes síde*, 'the people of the
fairy mounds' (see 1.3.3). This woman could change her shape into the
form of every animal. One day the *fianna* see a deer swimming in the
loch, which they follow. (Is this deer the woman? The text does not refer
to her anymore.) Then the monster rises and kills 100 hounds and 100
men. The *fianna* cannot, however, avenge themselves because of Finn's
prophecy which is given in the poem. Two stanzas refer to the
monster[122]:

"Coscrach atchiu-sa an muirbich   "Triumphant I see the *muirbech*
rosc dercain[123] brath tar buidnib,   A dragon's eye, doom on bands,
taebúaine taithnem taidlech   Green-sided, a shining brilliance,
biaid Cáemgin ga mbia cuibrech.   It will be shackled by Kevin.

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[117] Cp. DIL *s.v. fian*, 'a band of roving men whose principal occupations were
hunting and war, also a troop of professional fighting-men under a leader'. See
also Sjoestedt (1940/49, pp. 81-91).
[118] The tradition about the banishing of monsters by Finn is found in Meyer
(1910/37, pp. 86-7), and in Mac Neill (1904/08, pp. 75-80, 187-93). These texts
are, however, beyond this study's scope, because they are too late (see resp.
Meyer, 1910/37, p. xxxi; Murphy, 1941/53, pp. 59-60).
[119] See Stokes (1887b, pp. 56-63), for more about the Leinster king Mes Gegra,
who is decapitated by an Ulster hero (Conall Cernach). Mes Gegra's death is also
mentioned in the above-mentioned poem on the deaths of Irish heroes (see Stokes,
1902, pp. 308-9).
[120] This is "a name applied to the early Christian missionaries in Ireland, and in
particular to St. Patrick" (O'Rahilly, 1942, p. 141).
[121] For more about the meeting between the two world views (heroic and Christi-
an) in this text, see Nagy (1989), where this episode is also referred to and
characterised as follows: "heroic exploit gives way to saintly miracle, and traditio-
nal tale becomes unique history" (*ibid.*, p. 156).
[122] O'Grady (1892, II, p. 163) only gives the translation of the first few lines. I
am indebted to Ruairí Ó hUiginn for a rough translation of the poem.
[123] Variant readings are: *dreacoin, dregain*. O'Grady (1892, I, p. 148) edits
drecoin.

Muirbech lonn locha hEnaig	The fierce *muirbech* of Loch nEnaig
tonn 'na degaid adraigi,	The wave rises after it
sissi ac slaidhi na Féinde	It kills the *fianna*
óig na Feinde 'ga slaide"	The young warriors of the *fianna*
(Stokes, Windisch, 1900, p. 69)	strike it".

From the poem it becomes clear that the one who will overcome the monster is St Kevin of Glendalough[124].

The *muirbech* shares the following characteristics with the *muirdris*: first, the first part of the compound (1); second, being a water monster living in a loch (2), and third, the large size expressed by *adbal(-mór)* in the prose and by the description of the wave rising after the beast in the poem (6). There is thus some similarity, but not enough to connect the *muirbech* with the *muirdris* in a narrow sense. The origin and the end[125] of the *muirbech* are totally different from the facts known about the *muirdris*.

A beast designated *muiriasc*, 'sea fish', — also known as Ros(s)ualt — is mentioned in three kinds of text. First, it is found in the Middle Irish glosses on the Old Irish *Amra Choluim Chille*, 'The Eulogy of Columcille[126]' (ACC; edition from Rawl B 502 and translation: Stokes, 1899; edition from *Lebor na hUidre* (LU): Best, Bergin, 1929, pp. 11-41). Though the ascription of the text of the *amra* to the *fili* Dallán Forgaill may be authentic[127], the glosses "are the guesswork of late commentators" (Kenney, 1929/79, p. 427). One of the explanations of the word *ro-*

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[124] In the Latin and Irish *Lives* of Kevin, episodes about monsters also occur. They are beyond this study's scope, because the extant texts are too late. However, I would like to point out that in the Irish *Lives* traces of the AnS story can be found (the prophecy by Finn; the deaths of the *fianna* and the hounds caused by the monster; the binding of the monster by St Kevin; see Plummer, 1922/68, I, pp. 125-6, 131, 135-6; *ibid*, II, pp. 121-2, 127, 131-2). Moreover, motifs that can also be found in EFmL are present: the monster (*píast*) is called *úathmar* (Plummer, 1922/68, I, pp. 125-6); the lake in which the monster is sent by the saint rises and turns blood-red (*cró-dhercc*) when the monster turns itself (*ibid.*, I, pp. 126, 136; II, 122, 131) and whoever sees this will soon die (*ibid.*, I, pp. 126, 136; II, pp. 122, 132). It is not inconceivable that EFmL exerted some influence on this *Life.* Moreover, there is a connection between the movement of water and the monster, which is also found in other Irish texts (see below).

[125] It should be noted that what is prophesied of the *muirbech* bears some similarity with the fate of the great red dragon (compare also the dragon's eye mentioned in the poem) from the *Apocalypse of John*. The dragon will be on earth for some time (Apc 12:12), but then it will be bound with a large chain (*catena magna*) in the Abyss for 1000 years (Apc 20:1-3). Thereafter it will be let loose for a brief time. Finally, it will be cast into the pool (*stagnum*) of fire and brimstone. In this time, Judgment will be held (Apc 20:9-12).

[126] This is St Columba, whose *Life* is central to chapter 2.

[127] For more about the text, dated about 600, see Herbert (1988, pp. 9-12).

chuad[128] — mentioned in the *amra* in combination with *rúna*, 'hidden or occult things, mysteries, secrets (...)' — is that it is the name of a monster in the sea ("*be[i]st fil isind fairgi*"). There are three signs/portents (sg: *airde*) connected with this beast: when it spews or vomits ("*sceas*") towards land there will be poverty and scarcity there for either seven years or one. When it spews upwards there will be poverty and storm in that air. When it spews downwards there will be poverty and mortality among the beasts of the sea ("*mila in mara*"). The secrets of that animal ("*rúna ind anmanna sin*") were told by Columba to the people. Another name for the beast ("*beist*") is "Rosualt" (ACC §60; Stokes, 1899, pp. 256-7).

The word *muiriasc* is not used in the gloss; it is found in the second kind of text — the *dindšenchas* that also mentions this monster. The name of the place Mag Muirisce (spelled in different ways) is explained in several ways. One of the explanations[129] connects it with the *muiriasc mór*, 'huge sea fish', called Ros(s)ualt (see also above, note 25). It is found in the Book of Leinster *dindšenchas* (edition: Best, O'Brien, 1957, III, pp. 746-7; translation of the prose only: O'Grady, 1892, II, p. 527), the Bodleian *dindšenchas* (Stokes, 1892b, pp. 507-8), the Rennes *dindšenchas* (Stokes, 1894, pp. 476-7), and the metrical *dindšenchas* from several manuscripts (Gwynn, 1913, pp. 426-31).

The *dindšenchas* shows, to a large extent, similarity with the above-mentioned gloss on ACC. There are, however, a few differences. In the *dindšenchas* the sea monster is said to be cast ashore by the sea[130]. The order of the spewings is not always the same and the choice of words differs in details. The *dindšenchas* is more explicit about the disasters that are mentioned after the spewings and the action of the Ros(s)ualt's tail is sometimes referred to. The spewings in sea, air/clouds and on land are connected respectively with the foundering of boats and destruction of sea animals; destruction among flying animals[131]; (stench), destruction among people and cattle. The Leinster and Bodleian *dindšenchas* relate the tradition with Columba and quote the sentence from the *amra*, thereby giving the words "*rúna Rosualt*". Neither the Rennes nor the metrical *dindšenchas* mention Columba. The Rennes text, moreover, gives the impression that the disasters — there called *plág*, 'plague, pestilence' — are caused instead of portended by the sea monster. Incidentally, Stokes relates the name of the monster to foreign animal designations, like

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[128] Variant reading from the manuscripts are: *rochúaid, rochuaid, rosuath, rocuaid* and *rosualt* (Stokes, 1899, p. 256, n. 4). Stokes follows *rošuath*, translating: 'of great sages'. He refers to alternative translations of *rochuaid* by others: 'very-wise', and 'of the great revelation' (*ibid.*, p. 257, n. 4).

[129] The other two explanations are: first, an inundation or flood of the land by great/dead sea fish, and second, the name of a woman called Muiresc who is connected with the land.

[130] This is not mentioned in the metrical *dindšenchas*.

[131] The metrical *dindšenchas* gives: "*ba hág ar na hairdenaib*", 'it was war upon the constellations' (Gwynn, 1913, pp. 428-9).

German *wall-ross*, English *wal-rus*[132] (Stokes, 1870-72, p. 258), Old Norse *hrossvalr*, Old English *horshwæl* (*idem*, 1892b, p. 508[133]).

The third text that gives a form of this beast is a heroic text: the Middle Irish *Cath Ruis na Ríg*, 'The Battle of Ross na Ríg' (edition and translation: Hogan, 1892). In §10 of this text *rossail*, translated by Hogan as 'walruses', and other beasts are mentioned which rise in a sea in front of a fleet of warriors: "*a róin 7 rossail 7 a chorr-cind 7 a chenandain 7 il-ríana in mara mór-adbuil*", 'the seals and walruses and crane-heads and 'cenandans' and 'ilrians' of the tremendous sea' (*ibid.*, pp. 14-5). The text does not offer more details. Hogan (*ibid.*, p. 15, n. 10) connects *rossail* with *rosualt* and suggests "walrus (?)". Somewhat further in the same note he says: "*rossail* = ross-hwæl, horse-whale (?)". (For suggestions about the other beasts, see *ibid*. The *coirrchinn* are also mentioned in *In cath catharda*, see above.)

Is there any link between the *muirdris* and the *muiriasc*? They share the first part of their name, *muir-* (1); they live in a sea bay or the sea, although the *muiriasc* is, according to the *dindšenchas*, cast ashore from the sea (2). The *muiriasc* spews, which differs from the *muirdris*, which expands and contracts (4). Below, I will mention monsters that spew (and swallow) water, which I will connect with the expansion and contraction of the *muirdris*. However, I believe that the Ros(s)ualt is different: it does not spew water, but the (smelly) contents of its stomach (see Gwynn, 1913, pp. 428-9). In the translations this is indicated by rendering *sceïd* as 'vomits'. The *muiriasc* is, finally, huge (*mór*) like the *muirdris* (6).

In sum, there are a few similarities between the two kinds of monster, but not enough to identify them with each other. The specific characteristics do not coincide. The Ros(s)ualt, who in the majority of the texts presents some kind of omen explained by a saint, is quite different from the *muirdris* encountered by the king. There is only a general similarity between the two large sea monsters.

Another monster designated by a compound starting with *muir-* is a *muirselche* in §34 of the long version of *Tochmarc Emire*, 'The wooing of Emer'[134] (TE; edition: Van Hamel, 1933/78, pp. 20-68; preceding to this Kuno Meyer, 1888, translated the text). The language of this long version is dated to the 10th or 11th century (Van Hamel, 1933/78, pp. 17-8). The word *muirselche* has been explained in several ways: Meyer (1890, p. 434, n. 1) translates 'sea turtle'; Edward Gwynn (1924, p. 295) 'octopus', explaining: "The *muir-selche*, lit. 'sea-snail', must be a monster cuttle-fish" (*ibid.*, p. 454); Anton Gerard van Hamel (1933/78, p. 199) 'a sea-snail, a sea-monster', and Edel (1980, p. 222) 'literally: 'sea snail'; more

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[132] Compare also the Dutch word *walrus*.

[133] See also Ó hUiginn (1993, p. 34).

[134] Fergus mac Leite is also mentioned in this text in a poem about the youths present in Emain Macha (TE §92; Van Hamel, 1933/78, p. 67; Meyer, 1888, p. 307).

generally: an animal that lives in water and has a carapace or shell[135]'. DIL translates *seilche* as 'a shell-bearing animal or insect', adding the following possibilities: 'a turtle or tortoise[136]; a snail'. The idea of an octopus, given by Gwynn, has probably sprung from an association of the sucking activity of the *muirselche* (see below) with the sucking parts of an octopus's tentacles. As it is not clear what kind of beast was meant by *muirselche* and because it is clearly part of a mythological context which makes identification even more difficult and perhaps also unnecessary, I will refer to it by its Irish name.

The monster occurs in one of the explanations of the place name Mag Muirthemne and it is encountered by the Dagda[137] (*dag-dia*, 'the good God'), one of the supernatural beings in early Irish texts[138]:

"Nó dano is de atá   Or else it is from this that it is
Mag Muirthemne fair .i.   called Mag Muirthemne (Plain of the
                                      Sea of Darkness/ Death)[139]:

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[135] The original text reads: "*wörtlich 'Meerschnecke'; mehr allgemein ein im Wasser lebendes, mit Panzer oder Schale versehenes Tier*".

[136] There is a terrestrial monster described as a *seilche* in the *dindsenchas*: "*Glend in Máta .i. seilc[h]i sin, ut alii dicunt*", 'The Glen of the Máta, that was a tortoise, as some say' (Stokes, 1894, pp. 292-3). For more about this monster, see Stokes (*ibid.*, pp. 292-3, 328-9) and Gwynn (1900, pp. 20-3, 74; *id.*, 1906, pp. 12-3, 22-5; *id.*, 1913, 100-3, 495, which is a new edition and translation of Gwynn, 1900, pp. 20-3).

[137] Hilda R. Ellis Davidson (1988, pp. 204-7) describes the aspects of the Dagda (comparing him with the Germanic God Thor). I give an abstract of her findings here. The Dagda is associated with the sky and an important attribute is his mighty club. This club is extremely heavy; one end brings death, the other restores to life. Moreover, it could be used to mark boundaries between provinces by making a ditch called 'mark of the Dagda's Club'. The Dagda bears the title *Rúad Ro-fessa*, 'Lord of Perfect Knowledge', which is in *Cóir Anmann*, 'The Fitness of Names', explained as: "it is he that had the perfection of the heathen science and it is he that had the multiform triads" (quoted in *ibid.*, p. 204). He is potent and gifted and appears as a huge and primitive male. He has a voracious appetite (*ibid.*, p. 205) and is "renowned for his sexual prowess" (*ibid.*, p. 206). Another title of his is Eochaid *Ollathir*, 'Great Father'. With his cauldron of plenty he is "the dispenser of unfailing hospitality" (*ibid.*, p. 206). He is furthermore associated with one of Ireland's pre-historic grave mounds: the *Brug na Bóinne*, or New Grange. See also Gray (1982, p. 121).

[138] Translation based upon Meyer (1888, p. 153), Gwynn (1924, p. 295) and suggestions of Van Hamel (1933/78, glossary) and Edel (1980, pp. 221-3).

[139] It should be noted that according to Francis John Byrne (1971, p. 165), *Muirtheimne* originally is the name of a population group, ending in *-ni*. It would have become fossilised in an Irish place name after the people themselves had disappeared. Byrne (*ibid.*, n. 3) quotes Donnchadh Ó Corráin, pointing out: "the name Muirtheimne (preserved in the genitive plural Mag Muirtheimne, Conailli Muirtheimne) probably commemorates a maritime branch of the Corcu Theimne or Temenrige".

muir druídechta ro baí fair	there was a magic sea over it (the plain, JB)
co muirselche ann	with a *muirselche* in it (the sea, JB)
co n-aicniud súigthech leis	having the disposition/nature of sucking[140]
con súiged	so that it would suck
in fer co n-armgaisciud for lár	a man in armour in the midst
a istadbuilc.	of its treasure-bag.
Co tánic in Dagdae	The Dagda came
7 a lorg anfaid leis	with his club of fury/storm[141]
cor chan na bríathra sa fris,	and he chanted these words to it,
cor tráig fo chétóir .i.:	so that it immediately receded/ebbed away, namely:
'Toí do chend cúasachtach,	'Turn your hollow head
toí do chorp cisachtach,	turn your tribute-exacting[142] body
toí do thul"	Turn your forehead/wave crest[143]
(Van Hamel, 1933/78, p. 36[144])	

[140] DIL *s.v. súigthech*, 'sucking, drawing, pulling', where this instance is translated 'with magnetic properties'.

[141] *Anfud* means 'tempest, storm; turbulence, fury, rage'. The weapon called *lorg anfaid* also occurs in *Táin Bó Cúailnge* Rec. I: Mac Roth, sent as a messenger to Cú Chulainn, has a *lorg anfaid* in his hand (O'Rahilly, 1976a, p. 39, l. 1250, translates 'a great club'; *ibid.*, p. 159).

[142] See DIL *s.v. císach*, 'receiving or exacting tribute'. DIL gives *s.v. císachtach*, 'resorbent', but this seems to be a misquotation of Gwynn's translation of a word in the next line (*toghuidhe/tosúigthe*; see below). Gwynn (1924, p. 295) translates 'ravening' in the parallel section of the *dindsenchas* emending *císachtach* into *cíccarach*, 'ravenous'. Meyer (1888, p. 153) translates 'dirty'; Edel (1980, p. 222) 'schlürfenden'. I propose 'tribute-exacting': first, one could connect this with the *istad-bolc* (DIL *s.v. etsad/estad/autsad/itsad*, 'treasury, storehouse; abode, dwelling-place, residence; retreat') of the dangerous beast demanding tribute sucking it into its treasure bag. Second, in a wider sense it is the sea (either this magic one or the sea in general) that exacts tribute from humanity, sucking people into its depths.

[143] *Tul* means 'protuberance, projecting part, swelling'; *tul étain* is 'forehead', also expressed by *tul* only. Edel (1980, pp. 222-3) believes that *tul tuinne*, 'crest of a wave', may also be intended here as the whole utterance seems to address both beast and sea.

[144] The next three words in Van Hamel's edition (1933/78, p. 36) are: "*taigi baig thaig*". Van Hamel notes that they are obviously corrupt. He gives a variant reading: "*tagebaitai*" and proposes *taidbertach* for this, which he translates in his glossary as 'gazing, lurking' (DIL *s.v. taidbred* b), 'looking at, gazing at, surveying, inspecting'). This would result in: 'Turn your gazing forehead'. Meyer (1888, p. 153) translates "Silent thy ... brow". Gwynn (1924, p. 294) translates the related *dindsenchas* text (see below) which reads: "*Toí do thul toghuidhe. Báig thúaigh*" by: 'Turn thy resorbent forehead! Avaunt! Begone!' (*ibid.*, p. 295). He (*ibid.*, p. 454) explains *toghuidhe* as *tosúigthe* (DIL *s.v. tosúgad*, 'act of imbibing') and *báig thúaigh* as *aig thaig* (DIL *s.v. taig*). There is, however,

"taí do bath,   Turn your death/sea
taí'"   Turn'
(Edel, 1980, p. 222).

In the ambiguous word *bath* (also *baath, báth*), meaning both 'death' and
'sea', the etymological explanation of Mag Muirthemne (*muir*, 'sea';
teime, 'darkness, death') seems to be repeated and stressed.

This tradition on Mag Muirthemne also occurs in the *dindsenchas*
(according to Gwynn, 1924, p. 454, the entry has been borrowed from
TE). The *dindsenchas* on Mag Muirthemne differs from the section in TE
on a few points. First, the *dindsenchas* describes an action that the Dagda
undertakes with his weapon: "*rothom uadh for an muir-tselche*" (Gwynn,
1924, p. 294), '[he] plunged it down upon the *muirselche*' (*ibid.*, p. 295;
Gwynn translates *muirselche* as 'octopus'). Second, in TE the Dagda's
arrival is announced, immediately followed by the description of its
consequence (the receding/ebbing away of the danger) and then his words
are given. In the *dindsenchas* first his words are given and then the effect
is described, which is also different:

"Co rothraigh an muir-tselche desin   "Then the *muirselche* retired
cosin muir ndruidhechta   to the magic sea[145];
7 comadh desin adbertha   and hence, may be, the place was
Mag Murthemne de"   called Mag Muirthemne"
(Gwynn, 1924, p. 294)   (*ibid.*, p. 295).

The *muirdris* and the *muirselche* share the following aspects: both have
a name starting with *muir-* (1) and live in water, either a loch or a magic
sea (2). There might be some similarity concerning the fourth aspect:
perhaps the sucking by the *muirselche*, the swallowing of men into its
(treasure) bag (*bolg*) and its head being hollow could be connected with the
expansion and contraction of the *muirdris* which is compared with a
(smith's) bellows (*bolg*). This is of course speculation but — as I will show
below — there are more water monsters in Irish texts with this 'sucking
nature' connected with water. If the treasure bag is part of its body then
the monster must be huge (6) as well, because whole men in armour
disappear into it. There are no parallels for aspects 3 and 5; 7 may have an
implicit parallel in the horror presented by the beast when men disappear
under the water's surface because of its actions.

This version seems to combine aspects from EFmL and VC (see
above, *sub* Hiberno-Latin texts). A beast is encountered by a man with a

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another solution for this problem in which one does not need to emend the text.
Following Edel (1980, p. 222), I give the text of 23 N 10 which was not used by
Meyer and Van Hamel.

[145] Gwynn translates: "Then the magic sea retired with the octopus". However,
the Irish text first mentions the monster and then the sea. Moreover, *co* with the
accusative means 'to' (with the dative, it means 'with').

supernatural aspect (the Dagda is a supernatural being; Fergus is a sacral king; Columba is a holy man) who uses either violence (the Dagda with his *lorg anfaid* in the *dindšenchas*; Fergus with his sword) and/or words of power against the monster (the Dagda in TE and the *dindšenchas* chanting words; Columba uttering a command in formulaic form and making sacred gestures). The monster immediately retreats in VC and TE, whereas it is killed in EFmL.

The monster which has the second part of its name in common with the *muirdris* is also found in the context of an explanation of a place name, just like the *muiriasc* and the *muirselche*. A *sm(e)irdris* is described in AnS in a story about the name *Tipra na Scathdeirce* (Well of Scáthderc/Mirror):

"Scathderc ingen Chumaill

ro baidhed inti
ac dechain na smirdrissi
Locha Lurgain (...)
corub eisti sin
ro eirig Lach linide lindfuar Lurgan,
co ro lethastar óta in chorrabhall

í cind tSleibe Smóil meic Eidhleccair,
risa n-apar Sliab Bladma
issin tan-sa,
conicci seo,
7 ro bói ic lethnachud tar
in cuicid uile archena.

"[It is named after] Scáthderc, daughter of Cumall,
who was drowned in the spring
while she was looking at the *smirdris* [monster] of Loch Lurgan.
It was out of the spring
that wavy, chilly Loch Lurgan arose

and overflowed from the crooked apple tree
at the top of Slíab Smóil meic Edleccair,
known as Slíab Bladma[146]
in this time[147],
all the way here,
and it spread over[148]
the entire province [of Leinster].

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[146] Loch Lurgan is north-east of Slíab Bladma (Dobbs, 1946, p. 168). There is a connection in the *dindšenchas* between the etymology of Slíab Bladma and water monsters (see also above, n. 24). One of the explanations of the place name is that it is from sea monsters (*bleda mara*) or sea beasts (*bíasta mara*), which live in water and on land. They are called *ruiseda* and destroy trees. This is why the mountain is called *Slíab bledach Bledma*, 'monsterful Slíab Bledma' (Stokes, 1894, p. 301). In the metrical *dindšenchas* (Gwynn, 1906, pp. 56-7) the name of the monsters is *ruisenda*. The expression *Sléib bledaig Blod*, 'monster-haunted Slíab Blod', occurs two quatrains earlier where the place name is connected with a man called Blad (*ibid.*, pp. 54-5) and also in *Félire Óengusso Céli Dé*, 'The Calendar of Oengus Céle Dé (Oengus Servant of God)' (FO): "ó Sléib bledech Bledmae" (Stokes, 1905a, p. 105). FO is Old Irish, dated to the 9th century (*ibid.*, p. xxxviii) which shows that this expression is comparatively old. I do not know what *ruise(n)da* stands for; perhaps it is connected with *ruise, ruisse, russe*, 'red', and *ruisid*, 'reddens, stains red?'.

[147] Nagy translates 'then'.

[148] Nagy translates 'threatened to flood'.

Ocus is annsin dorigni Find	It is then that Finn performed
tind airbirt réntoghaide	the greatest exploit
is ferr dorigne nech reime riam	that anyone has ever performed
7 ina diaid	before or after: [he brought]
.i. sughmaire	a[149] "sucker" (súgmaire)
a tír na hIndia	from the land of India,
7 na draithi a tír na hAlmaine	the druids from the land of Germany,
7 na bangaisgedacha	and the female warriors
a tírib Sacsan 7 Franc,	from the lands of England and France,
co ro tsúighedur	so that they sucked up
in loch línide lindfuar sin"	that[150] wavy, chilly lake"
(Stokes, Windisch, 1900, p. 123)	(Nagy, 1985, p. 116).

There seem to be two monsters in this episode. I will first deal with the *sm(e)irdris* and later with the *súgmaire*.

The *sm(e)irdris* is mentioned twice again in the text: first, in a question about the names of all the people that were drowned by the "*smirdris*" of Loch Lurgan (Stokes, Windisch, 1900, p. 123, l. 4546) and in the concluding sentence when they have been enumerated (*ibid.*, p. 124, ll. 4561-2): "*in smeirdris Locha Lurggan*".

The *sm(e)irdris* shares several aspects with the *muirdris*. First, there is similarity in their names because the ending is the same (1). The first part of the name of Loch Lurgan's monster is either *smeir-* or *smir-*. *Smir* means 'marrow'; *smér* can signify '(black-)berry', but it is improbable that this latter word is intended, because the *e* is not long and, moreover, the variant reading *smirdris* leaves the *e* out altogether. O'Grady translates *sm(e)irdris* by 'bramble-bush'. Other scholars see the word as a name for a monster: Stokes (Stokes, Windisch, 1900, p. 426) gives 'a lake-monster' in his glossary; DIL gives *s.v. smeirdris*, 'name of a certain lake-monster'; and most important is O'Brien's suggestion (referred to by Binchy, 1952, p. 43): "(...) a monster in Loch Lurgan is called *smirdris*, *smeirdris* (*smirgrís* R), gen. *smirdrissi* (...). This may merely be a late variant of *muirdris*". The beast is a water monster (2) connected with a spring transforming into a loch and turning into a flood. This beast might have body parts like branches with stings as its name consists of a word meaning a thornbush (*dris*; 3). Perhaps one could connect the expansion of the *muirdris* (4) with the flooding of the *sm(e)irdris*'s spring (and the contraction of the *muirdris* with the sucking by the *súgmaire*), but this is of course speculative. A more solid basis for comparison is the fifth aspect: looking at the monster is dangerous. The woman Scáthderc looks at the *sm(e)irdris* that is apparently present in the spring, which then floods, thereby drown-

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[149] Nagy translates 'the'.
[150] Nagy translates 'the'.

ing her[151]. It should be noted that her name means 'Mirror', which might indicate a double sense: she looks at the monster but perhaps also at herself using the water of the spring as a mirror. This could be contrasted with the man Fergus, who first looks at the monster and is then restrained from seeing himself mirrored in water[152]. There also seems to be a parallel with the later tradition in the entry in the *Annals of Tigernach*, where Fergus is said to have drowned (compare figure 1). The text does not refer to the size of the *sm(e)irdris* (6) and there is no explicit mention of its horribleness (7) although the list of drowned people[153] is considerable, which might perhaps be seen as an allusion to this.

[151] There are more women in the *dindšenchas* who suffer drowning caused by a flooding well. First, a thigh/foot, a hand and an eye of Bóand are disfigured by the three waves of a secret well which is tabu to visit. When the woman flees she is followed by the water, thus creating the river Boyne. She is drowned at the Boyne-mouth (Stokes, 1894, pp. 315-6; Gwynn, 1913, pp. 26-33). In one of the stanzas of the poetry version looking at the well is explicitly said to cause a blemish (Gwynn, 1913, pp. 28-9, ll. 45-8). The river Shannon is caused by the woman Sinann, who wants to gaze upon a supernatural well under the sea. She too is drowned by it (Stokes, 1894, pp. 456-7; Gwynn, 1913, pp. 286-97). See also the *dindšenchas* on Tuag Inber (Tuag is a woman drowned by the flood-tide), which describes a well guarded by a woman. When she leaves the well open, it swells up and drowns several people (Gwynn, 1924, pp. 58-69, see ll. 137-44). (In this poem *Tonn Rudraige*, 'the Wave/Flood/Surge of Rudraige', (*ibid.*, l. 62) one of the three waves of Ireland and the red-stained (*rorúad*) Clann Rudraige (l. 130) are mentioned.) For further references, see Nagy (1985, p. 273, n. 58, 60). For other texts about women and floods, see Carey (1987).

[152] I am indebted to Józsi Nagy, who first suggested this occurrence of mirror images to me.

[153] Preceding this list a leader of the *fianna* is mentioned: Fer-domon mac Imomain (Stokes, Windisch, 1900, p. 123). Margaret Dobbs (1946, p. 166) draws the attention to the fact that a Ferdomun occurs in the above mentioned poem *Aidheda forni do huaislib Erenn*. This Ferdomon belongs to the tales connected with Finn mac Cumaill (*ibid.*) and she believes that there must have been a story about Ferdomon and Loch Lurgan, which is now lost (*ibid.*, p. 167). She refers to *Vita Sancti Ruadani*, 'The Life of Saint Ruadan' (§xxv; Plummer, 1910/68, II, p. 250), where a Ferdomuyn is said to have split a very poisonous, dangerous beast (*bestia*) in Loch Lurgan with his sword in two. This text is, however, outside this study's scope (being "of comparatively late date"; Kenney, 1929/79, p. 392; for folklore accounts about the monster of Loch Lurgan, see Dobbs, 1946, p. 167, n. 1). Incidentally, Ferdomon is sometimes referred to as the grandson of the Dagda (*ibid.*, p. 167), who conquered the *muirselche* (see above).

Figure 1

EFmL	AnS
man looks at *muirdris* in water (*la diuderc/decsain*)	woman looks at *smeirdris* in water (*ac dechain*; cp. the second part of her name: *derc*)
man is restrained from seeing himself mirrored in water	woman mirrors herself? (*Scáthderc*) in water
AT	**AnS**
man is drowned	woman is drowned

As I mentioned above in the context of the study of the *muirselche*, there are other water monsters with a 'sucking nature' and the second enigmatic being in this episode, the *súgmaire*, seems to be one of them. This 'sucking creature' is used for ending the danger by Finn mac Cumaill, Scáthderc's brother and leader of the *fíanna*. Finn brings order into the chaos caused by the flood. The presence of druids and female warriors might indicate the danger this second beast presents, which is perhaps restrained by (druidic) magic and (female) force. The druids and warrior women seem to be employed in the sucking up of the flood, but perhaps it is meant that they all used the *súgmaire* to suck up the waters.

AnS does not give much information about the *súgmaire* but there are several other texts which may throw light on this kind of monster. Important characteristics of the *súgmaire* in AnS are the sucking (*súigid*) of water and the location in India. At this point one might wonder what all this means in connection with the *muirdris*. What I hope to show here is that a certain kind of monster is present in Irish texts that is related to a concept which connects movements of water with water monsters. This idea might be present in an early form in a nutshell in the *muirdris* in EFmL and gradually developed into a more complex idea.

It should be noted that the idea of 'water movement caused by monsters' is something which one can find in other literary environments as well. I will not deal with instances from cultures which are far removed from the Irish, such as the Chinese[154] and Australian Aboriginals[155], because I am dealing here with possible influences on Irish texts. I will first advert to a related subject — the personification of the movement of water — which can be found in some Irish texts that show influence from classical texts. This is mainly found in Hiberno-Latin literature, which is why I return to

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[154] See, for instance, Hopkins (1931a and 1931b) about Chinese dragons and rain.
[155] See, for instance, Buchler and Maddock (1978) about the Aboriginal rainbow serpent.

this group of texts first, although strictly speaking they are out of place in this section on Old and Middle Irish texts. Thereafter I will deal with texts in Irish that describe monsters that move water and I hope to show that this motif may be present in the description of the *muirdris*, albeit implicitly.

The early Hiberno-Latin poem *De mari*, 'On the Sea' (edition and translation: Herren, 1974, pp. 92-7), gives both a description of monsters swallowing water and a personification of the sea with its tides. It can be found in the collection called the A-text of *Hisperica Famina*, 'Western Sayings' (HF; edition and translation of the A-text: Herren, 1974; dated to the 7th century; Lapidge, Sharpe, 1985, p. 93). Large sea monsters (*c[o]etia*[156]) swallow sealife, salt water and fish and they sweep the water of the sea with their scaly heads (ll. 417-21). The beasts thus swallow water, and move the water of the sea with their heads. The sea is personified in that the poem refers to the tide that is enfolded in its ancient womb (*uterus*), when it flows backwards (ll. 396-8). It should be noted that there are several references to supernatural persons from classical mythology in the poem[157].

Infamous, fearsome Charybdis from classical mythology[158] also occurs in two Hiberno-Latin texts, connected with St Columba. This mysterious creature — nothing is said about her appearance — swallows and spews the water three times a day and in this way makes it swirl and seethe like a whirlpool. Obviously, the movement of water is here personified. The name Charybdis is used in the plural in AP, where it indicates whirlpools that choke giants who are punished in the Underworld[159]. In VC I.5 (see also 2.3.4) Adomnán uses the name Charybdis as a term for a specific whirlpool: "*in undosís carubdis Brecani aestibus*" (Anderson, 1961/91, p. 28), 'in the surging tides of the whirlpool of Brecán' (*ibid.*, p.

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[156] According to Herren (1974, p. 14), lines 416-22 "depict the playful activities of a school of dolphins". Dolphins are indeed mentioned in the line preceding the sea monsters, but I wonder if one could refer to dolphins as enormous beasts. I suggest therefore that the sea monsters are a species different from the dolphin kind. (Line 422 says that sea water tastes salty.)

[157] For instance, Anfitridis in l. 381, Tethis (spelled Tithis) in l. 393, Neptune in ll. 396 and 421, and Nereus in l. 410.

[158] See, for instance, Homer's *Odyssey* XII.104-7; 235-43; 426-46 (edition: Murray, 1919/54; translation: Shewring, 1980) and Virgil's *Aeneid* III.421-3; 554-67 (edition: Ribbeck, 1895/1966; translation: West, 1991). (Homer may have lived *c.* 800 BC, Publius Vergilius Maro 70 — 19 BC.) For a more elaborate discussion of this motif, see my "The movement of water as symbolised by monsters in early Irish texts", forthcoming in *Peritia*.

[159] "*ecce gigantes gemere sub aquis magno ulcere / comprobantur incendio aduri ac suplicio / Cocitique Carubdibus strangulati turgentibus / Scillis obtecti fluctibus eliduntur et scropibus*" (Bernard, Atkinson, 1898, I, p. 75), 'Lo! the giants are recorded to groan beneath the waters with great torment, to be burned with fire and punishment; and, choked with the swelling whirlpools of Cocytus, overwhelmed with Scillas, they are dashed to pieces with waves and rocks' (*ibid.*, II, p. 152).

29). Therefore, even though a name from classical mythology is used, these two texts use it as a technical term for a whirlpool; there is no sign of personification[160]. It is with the dangerous whirlpool from VC that I would like to start the search for the monster symbolism connected with the movement of water in Irish texts.

The movements of water in this whirlpool described by the verbs *súigid*, 'sucks, draws in, absorbs, attracts', and *sceïd*, 'vomits, spews, ejects (…)', occur in *Sanas Chormaic*, 'Cormac's Glossary' (SC; edition: Meyer, 1912; translation: O'Donovan, Stokes, 1868). The greater part of this text, ascribed to Cormac mac Cuilennáin (831 — 908) prince and bishop of Cashel, "was written, if not in the time of Cormac, at least within a century or so after his death" (Stokes, 1862, p. xviii). The name of the whirlpool *Coire Breccáin*, 'Cauldron of Breccán', is explained in this glossary; the whirlpool itself is described in a personifying way:

"Coire Brecáin
.i. saobhc[h]oire mór (…)
.i. comruc na n-ilmuire.
(…) 7 suigthe sís i fudomhoin

co mbí a coire obéle

nosuigfedh cid Érind [7]
focherad ind for aonchói.
Scéid iterum in loimm sin súas
7 rocluinter a torandbrúcht
7 a breisimnech 7 a esgal
iter néllaib
fo c[h]osmuiless ngaluigedar coire
mbís for tein"
(Meyer, 1912, pp. 27-8)

"'Breccán's caldron'
i.e. a great whirlpool (…)
in the meeting of the various seas,
(…) they are sucked[161] into the depths
so that the caldron remains with its mouth wide open;
and it would suck even the whole of Ireland into its yawning gullet.
It vomits *iterum* that draught up,
so that its thunderous eructation
and its bursting and its roaring
are heard among the clouds,
like the steam-boiling of a caldron
on the fire"
(O'Donovan, Stokes, 1868, p. 41[162]).

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[160] The matter is slightly more complicated in the case of AP because Scylla is mentioned there as well, but still there seems to be no personification in the strict sense.

[161] The manuscripts read: *co suidet* and *suigthe*; Stokes (O'Donovan, Stokes, 1868, p. 41, n. *f*) considers these forms to be corrupt and proposes *co suigetar*.

[162] The verbs to suck (*súigid*) and to vomit (*sceïd*) are here used, just as in the descriptions of Charybdis from the *Odyssey* and *Aeneid*. Moreover, the image of a cauldron is given, as in the *Odyssey* (XII.235-9). The parallels between the texts of Homer and Cormac have been pointed out by J. Rendel Harris (1925, pp. 94-5) and W.B. Stanford (1976, p. 117) but the difficulty remains of how to explain the transmission from Greek into Irish. Rendel Harris (1925, 103-5) believes to have identified Scylla and Charybdis: the former is a sea rock, the latter a sea cauldron like Coire Breccáin and both had their origin in the Hebrides. He suggests (*ibid.*, p. 103) that perhaps Phoenician sailors or Norsemen brought the story of the great whirlpool to the Mediterranean, or it travelled overland from

The movements of 'the many seas around the earth' are, however, in another text ascribed to a beast (*míl*). This idea is found in *An Tenga Bithnúa*, 'The Evernew Tongue' (TB; Stokes, 1905b), dated to the 10th century or earlier (Dumville, 1973, p. 337). It says in TB §74:

"Toaitne iarum	"Then it [the sun, JB] shines upon
airbe in mil tindnaig	the enclosure of the beast who brings
na ilmuiri im toibu talm<u>an</u>	the many seas around the flanks of
	the earth
di ca<u>ch</u> leith,	on every side,
shuiges na ilmhuire aitherru<u>ch</u>,	who sucks the many seas back again
co facoib na <u>t</u>rachtu tirma	so that he leaves the beaches dry
di ca<u>ch</u> leith"	on every side"
(Stokes, 1905b, p. 124)	(Carey, 1994, p. 15).

Obviously, the tides are meant by these movements. The verb *súigid* in this context indicates ebb. (Other ideas about the tides are referred to in TB §§33, 35, (46), 114, 132, 152.)

Another important text is a Late Middle Irish (or Early Modern Irish) poem of 22 quatrains[163], beginning with *Tiagait trí haibne inár dtír*, 'Three rivers flow into our land' (TTA; John Carey is preparing an edition and translation for publication; Robin Flower, 1926/92, p. 476, refers to the first line as follows: "*Tigit tri aoidhbne an bur tir*", 'Three rivers flow into your land'), about the three rivers flowing from Paradise, the sucking creatures that cause the tides and the three rivers of Hell (Flower, *ibid.*). In this text more than one beast is responsible for the ebb-tide and flood-tide and they are called *súgmaire* like the beast from AnS (see above) with which Loch Lurgan is drained. The relevant part of the poem says[164]:

the Baltic. In this way, Homer would have heard about this dangerous whirlpool and used it for the *Odyssey* (see also *ibid.*, pp. 106-15). Stanford does not invert the influence. He mentions possibilities for contact: "Greek merchants coming to Ireland from Spain or Gaul, or Irish travellers to a Greek colony on the continent of Europe" (1976, p. 117), and after business the Irish may have heard the Homeric stories. It should be noted, incidentally, that the image of the sea moving as a boiling cauldron is also found in the *Book of Job*, where Leviathan causes the movement of water. It says that Leviathan will make the deep sea boiling like a pot or as boiling ointments. ("*fervescere faciet quasi ollam profundum mare ponet quasi cum unguenta bulliunt*"; Iob 41:22.)

[163] This poem is found in the following manuscripts: 30 = 23.B.38, RIA, 18th century; 147 = 23.M.46, RIA, 19th c.; 344 = 23.M.39, RIA, 19th c.; 707 = 23.H.18, RIA, 18th c.; 786 = 23.A.32, RIA, 18th c.; 1169 = 24.C.39, RIA, 18th c.?; 1360 = H.4.19, TCD, about AD 1742; 1399 = H.5.28, TCD, AD 1679; G 137, NLI, 18th c.; G 436, NLI, 19th c.; Add 30512, BL, 15th-16th c.; and finally, Morris ms. 11, AD 1737 (for the last manuscript, see the *Gaelic Journal* XIV, 1905, pp. 765-6).

[164] I am indebted to John Carey who has sent me his transcription and translation of the quatrains about the sucking creatures (letter, 2-8-1993).

"Cad linus 7 tráighius ann? (...)	"What causes flood and ebb? (...)
.9. súghmure at[h]á fan mbith	There are nine suckers throughout the world
líonus 7 tráighus 'na rith:	who cause the currents to flood and ebb:
7 líonus gach re nuair	who cause flood and ebb alternately
7 tráighus gach aoncuan"	in every harbour".

I believe that a climax of the development of this set of ideas about the movements of water connected with water monsters can be found in a small text in Rawl B. 502, beginning with *Ad-fét Augustín*, 'Augustine relates' (AA; edition and translation: Borsje, Ó Cróinín, 1995, p. 2). Here, aspects from the texts mentioned above are combined and ascribed to a beast that is a form of Leviathan[165]. The beast (*míl*) lives in the depths of the sea and land of India. When it swallows ("*co ndíbdai*", which is literally: 'when it drowns/extinguishes/destroys/exterminates') the currents of the great ocean it is ebb and when it spews ("*s[c]éas*") them out it is flood. Therefore, a combination of aspects of the *súgmaire* in AnS (swallowing water, being located in India) and the *súgmairi* in the above-mentioned poem (causing the tides) is found here. The following aspects are, in this context, important: the idea of a beast sucking/swallowing large amounts of water and spewing them out again, and the causing of the tides by this beast.

What I would like to posit here is the theory that the *muirdris*, with its characteristic of expanding and contracting[166], is at the beginning of this

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[165] For the identification of this beast as a form of Leviathan, see Borsje, Ó Cróinín (1995, pp. 3-10).

[166] Joseph Falaky Nagy (1983b, p. 40) discusses this characteristic in an article in which he compares Fergus with Beowulf, trying to explain why these kings perish in a fight with a monster. He compares the expanding and contracting of the *muirdris* with a characteristic of the hero Cú Chulainn in his battle fury. Cú Chulainn closes one eye and opens the other very widely (TBC Rec. I, ll. 430-2; O'Rahilly, 1976a, pp. 14, 137) or, in another description, he sucks (*imslo[i]c*) one eye into his head, and the other springs out on to his cheek (TBC Rec. I, ll. 2256-8; *ibid.*, pp. 69, 187). Nagy also compares Fergus with Cú Chulainn in his battle fury: both men are described by the verb *síabraid*, 'arouses to fury, distorts, transforms; enchants, bewitches'. Nagy furthermore refers to Marie-Louise Sjoestedt (1936, p. 13), who compares the way in which both men have their mouths stretched wide open, Cú Chulainn again in his battle fury. Nagy (1983b, p. 40) then links the two parallels (the *muirdris*//Cú Chulainn and Fergus//Cú Chulainn) concluding the following: "Thus the monster in effect inflicts a second-function condition upon Fergus, facial distortion, which shows him for what he is and disqualifies him from kingship" (*i.e.* Fergus is too much of a warrior to be a good king, JB. For more about this, see 1.3.4). Carey, in an article about the etymology of *bolg*, also connects the motif of battle fury with the *muirdris*. In the context of *bolg*, Carey (1988b, p. 81) refers to the Germanic verb **belgan* which

line of thought in Irish texts, which may have been combined with the observation of movements in a whirlpool and those of the tides. The description of expansion and contraction is compared with the movement of the bellows of a smith, an instrument that moves air. One could compare this with how our chests expand and contract when we breathe and thus move air. However, the *muirdris* lives underwater. The same movement under water moves water. The *muirdris* makes this movement continually. This repetition of movement is expressed by "*ala nuair (...) in uair naili*". Other texts referred to above also give the repetition of movement, but there it is connected with the tides. In the quatrain from TTA the repetition of movement is referred to by "*re nuair*"; SC gives "*iterum*" and TB §74 "*aitherruch*". TTA mentions "*tráighius*", 'ebb', and the episode about the *muirselche* in TE and in the parallel *dindśenchas* uses the verb *tráigid*, 'ebbs, recedes; causes to ebb; retreats, diminishes; exhausts'. SC is different in that it refers to a whirlpool instead of the tides. The repetition is also given in AA, because the swallowing and spewing are directly connected with ebb and flow, although there is no specific word that indicates the continuous movement.

The instrument referred to in EFmL — the bellows of a smith or *bolg ngobenn* — presents another clue in my line of reasoning. The word *bolg* has many meanings: it is a bellows, a bag, a belly, a bubble, a blister, and so forth. The *muirselche* is not compared with a *bolg* as the *muirdris*, but it has a *bolg*. It sucks people into its treasure bag (*istad-bolc*). As I mentioned above, the *muirselche* in TE is closely connected with water: it ebbs away together with the magic sea in which it lives. There is a *bolg*,

seems to mean 'to swell with anger'. He connects this with the fact that the *muirdris* is compared with a *bolg ngobann* and mentions that Fergus's distortion is indicated by *ro siapartha*. Carey (*ibid.*, p. 82) points out: "It is interesting that the monster's distension is here linked with a facial distortion reminiscent of Cú Chulainn's *riastrad*" (*i.e.* distortion, JB). He then quotes a text from the Late Old Irish *Triads of Ireland* in which a monster (the Beast (*Míl*) of Leittir Dallán) with a human head and a body like a smith's bellows (*builc gobann*) is mentioned (see Meyer, 1906b, pp. 30-1) and concludes: "I would suggest that these bellows-like water-monsters represent an oblique survival of the concept of the distended warrior (...)" (Carey, 1988b, p. 83). Although the findings of these scholars are interesting, I believe that more research has to be done into these motifs. For instance, I would like to point out that the movement of the *muirdris* is a continuous repetition, whereas the warrior fury of Cú Chulainn is a temporary state with a useful function (to fight better) which comes over him when needed, and Fergus enters a permanent state with a disqualifying function (he should no longer be king) for which there seems to be no solution (more about this in 1.3.4). Another point is that Carey calls the Beast of Leittir Dallán a water monster, but the text does not say this. The monster's father is a water monster (a water horse, or *ech usci*). Furthermore, the *muirdris* itself is not compared with a smith's bellows but its expansion and contraction is compared with it. (I have not taken the Beast of Leittir Dallán into account because of its human head: this study is limited to bestial monsters.)

'bag', connected with the movement of water in poem VIII ('The Crane-Bag') of *Duanaire Finn*, 'The Poem Book of Finn' (DF; edition: Mac Neill, 1904/8, pp. 21-2; translation: *ibid.*, pp. 118-20; dated to "the 13th century, or perhaps the very late Middle Irish period"; Murphy, 1941/53, p. 20). The poem gives the story of the origin of the bag, which is called *Corrbolg*, 'crane-bag', and it contains several treasures. The treasures are visible when the sea floods, and the bag is empty when the sea is in ebb[167]. The word *muirbolc*[168] means 'sea bag', and designates an inlet of the sea. This is a place where the movement of the tides is well visible. The seawater flows in and out of it as if into and out of a 'bag'. As was said above, the place where the *muirdris* lives has been identified as an inlet of the sea, where the water flows from the outer bay into the inner bay and *vice versa*, as influenced by the tides[169].

Dangerous movement of water which may draw/suck people down and drown them can be personified by monsters. This idea is not explicit in the description of the *muirdris*, but several clues are presented above which might lead in this direction. This symbolism that might be present in the portrayal of the *muirdris* is, in my opinion, a native image of the dangerous nature of water. When the idea is connected with the symbol of Leviathan it is obvious that external elements were added, but this seems to be a later development.

Summarising, there are several beasts that have either the first or the second part of their name in common with the *muirdris*. I have dealt with instances of *muirbech, muiriasc, muirselche*, and *sm(e)irdris*. Descriptions of the monster kind called *súgmaire*, which seems to be related to this complex, were included as well. Finally, a *míl* connected with the Indian Ocean was referred to as a kind of climax in the development from the *muirdris* as an expanding and contracting monster to this form of Leviathan, who causes the tides by swallowing and spewing water.

Here the survey of monsters that share either the first (*muir-*) or the second part (*-dris*) of the name of the *muirdris* ends. The monster is also called a *píast uiscide*. For this reason, *bíastai* which live in water and can be found in texts in Irish will be described now.

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[167] I am indebted to John Carey for this reference.

[168] See DIL, *s.v. muir: — bolc (bolg)*, 'a sea bag', inlet of the sea. It is mentioned as a place name in, for example, VC I.12 (*Muirbolc paradisi*) and VC III.23 (*Muirbolc már*). Cp. Sharpe's notes on these two places: about *Muirbolc paradisi* he says "the obvious candidate is the beautiful, enclosed Kentra Bay: its shape, and the fact that at low tide it is almost empty of water, make it fit the term *muirbolc* (...)" (Sharpe, 1995, p. 275) and *Muirbolc már* he also connects with this tidal phenomenon: "the emptying out of the sea at low tide may be the characteristic of a *muirbolc*" (*ibid.*, p. 308). For other references to *muirbolc*, see DIL.

[169] Ruairí Ó hUiginn kindly pointed out to me that the Modern Irish *boilg* means 'submerged reef' (N. Ó Dónaill, *Foclóir Gaeilge-Béarla*, 1978, *s.v.*). A reef influences the movement of water.

In the Old Irish *Táin Bó Froích* (TBF), a water monster occurs in §18 (Meid, 1970, pp. 37, 59). It is called *bíast* (1) and *míl*. The beast surfaces in a pool (*linn*) in a river (*ab*; 2). These are the only two comparable aspects as far as the monster is concerned, but there are more similarities between the two stories in which the two beasts are found.

First, there is the aspect of vagueness about the danger in the water. In EFmL the dwarf (*abacc*) forbids going into Loch Rudraige without explaining why. In TBF the protagonist — the warrior Froech — enquires about the water's nature before he enters it: "*Cindas na linde se?*" (*ibid.*, p. 36, §16), 'What kind of pool is this?'. 'We do not know of any diffi-culty (*dodaing*) in it', is the answer he receives from his host (King Ailill). As it is clear from the storyline that the last speaker has no good intentions towards the protagonist, this is probably also an instance of a speaker hiding his knowledge. There is, however, an opposition with EFmL because in TBF the hostile speaker actually persuades the hero to go into the water.

Another similarity is the fight with the monster. The beast grabs Froech, bites into or hangs on his side, is fought with in the water and is, like the *muirdris*, beheaded by the hero's sword. The other circumstances differ: Fergus uses his sword first to kill a woman (Dorn), whereas Froech receives his sword from a woman[170]. Furthermore, Fergus dies from his wounds whereas Froech is healed by supernatural women.

A final similarity is that the episode ends with an etymology about the pool where the event happens: "*Is de atá Dublind Froích*" (*ibid.*, p. 37, §18), 'From this it is called the Black Pool of Froech'. This could perhaps be considered a parallel to the red loch of Rudraige, although the etymol-ogy remains more or less implicit in EFmL.

From this it can be concluded that there are not many similarities between the *muirdris* and the *bíast* in TBF, but there are interesting parallels between the two stories, like the vagueness about the danger in the water, the fight with the monster in the water, and the etymology of the place name with which the story (EFmL)/ the episode (TBF) ends.

There is another heroic text which describes a fight between a hero and a water monster. This beast is found in §§85-6 in *Fled Bricrend*, 'The Feast of Bricriu' (FB; Henderson, 1899; for a more recent translation (into Dutch): Draak, De Jong, 1986). This tale starts, incidentally, with the preparation for the feast (from the title), for which a house is built in Dún Rudraige (§1). Furthermore, Fergus mac Leite is mentioned among the guests of the feast (§12). The monster episode belongs to the early part of this composite text (see Thurneysen, 1921/79, pp. 447-50), which is dated to not earlier than about 900 (Mac Eoin, 1982, p. 121). The encounter is

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[170] This woman (Findabair daughter of Queen Medb and King Ailill), like Dorn, disobeys the rules of society (cp. 1.3.4): nobody dares to bring Froech his sword for fear of the king and queen.

between the warrior Cú Chulainn[171], whose heroic superiority is a central motif in the text, and a *píast* rising from a loch.

Before the actual episode starts the coming of the beast has already been predicted. Cú Chulainn has to guard a fortress (belonging to Cú Roí) for a night to prove his strength. This night nine men plan to plunder the fortress and the monster that lives in the loch near the fortress intends to devour all inhabitants, both human and bestial (§83). The first thing that Cú Chulainn does is behead three groups of nine men (§84) and then continues his guard duty, sad and tired. Suddenly he hears the loch rising up — making the noise of a vast sea (*fairrge dímór*) — and sees the monster rising up, which seems to tower as high as thirty cubits above the loch. Then it jumps into the air towards the fortress with open mouth in order to swallow a royal house (§85). Cú Chulainn jumps into the air as well, performing a series of actions which result in his tearing the beast's heart out of its gullet with his hand. He cuts the monster into pieces with his sword and decapitates it (§86). The last danger in this sequence that the hero has to overcome is a *scáth*, 'shadow, (...) phantom', that comes from the sea in the West (§87). Earlier in the text (§81) this *scáth* has been described as being *dímór*, 'vast, huge, great'; *gránda*, 'horrible, terrible, ugly, repulsive, hateful', and *úathmar*. After hostile words and acts between the two of them Cú Chulainn performs the same feat (*foram clis*) as in the case of the monster and makes the *scáth* asking for quarter: "*Anmain in anmain a Chuchulainn*" (Henderson, 1899, p. 108), 'A life for a life, o Cú Chulainn'. Cú Chulainn reacts by demanding to be granted three wishes (*drinnroisc*). After this deal the *scáth* disappears (§87).

I have given this extensive summary because FB shows an opposite parallellism, or what perhaps could be called a thematic chiasmus, to EFmL. The parallels consist of: first, a fight between a hero and a supernatural male being coming from the sea ending in a request for quarter followed by the granting of *drinnroisc*, and second, a fight between a hero and a monster (*píast*) living in a loch. The oppositions are: first, the chronology between the two fights, and second, the size of the supernatural opponents in human shape (cp. figure 2).

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[171] In a *rosc* section (FB §52), this hero is described. Several images of water and of monsters are applied to him: "*Braó mara/ bara bledmaill/* (...)/ *tond mairnech/* (...)/ *mórbruth m-borrbíastae/* (...)" (Henderson, 1899, p. 64), 'Millstone/Eyebrows of the sea/ anger of a sea monster/ (...)/ destructive wave/ (...)/ great fury of mighty beast/ (...)' (translation based upon Draak, De Jong, 1986, p. 35). *Braó* is difficult to translate (Draak and De Jong, *ibid.*, translate: "*Maalstroom der zee*", 'vortex of the sea'). There seem to be two possibilities: first, *bró*, 'quern: millstone, grindstone (...)'; second, *brá*, 'eyebrow; brow' (see DIL, *s.v.*). I have a slight preference for *bró* as Cú Chulainn (in his battle fury) is compared with a millstone (*bró*) earlier in FB (§ 27).

Figure 2

EFmL	FB
hero fights small male being from the sea *anmain i nanmain — trí drinnroisc*	hero fights monster living in loch
hero fights monster living in loch	hero fights huge male being from the sea *anmain i nanmain — trí drinnroisc*

The monster in FB §85 shares several aspects with the *muirdris*: it is called *píast* (1); it lives in a loch (2); it makes the loch rise (like a flood?) and its noise is compared with a vast sea (4?); and it is huge (6). There are no parallels for characteristics 3 and 5; the 7th (being *úathmar*) is found in the episode about the *scáth*. At the same time, there are several differences: the monster from FB jumps into the air towards the fortress whereas the *muirdris* stays in the water. Furthermore, although it is decapitated by the hero's sword like the *muirdris*, the rest of the description of its defeat differs[172].

Based upon the similarities one could perhaps conclude that the monster in this episode from FB, combined with the fight of the *scáth* that follows it, is a variant version of the encounters with the *abacc* and the *muirdris* in EFmL.

One of the adventures of the voyagers in ICMD is that they sail a sea like a cloud, underneath which they see land (§23):

"(...) ad-chiat anmanda mór
n-uathmur biastaidhi
i crund ard 7 táin do almuib
7 indilib imon crund immacuaird
7 fer cona arm i farrudh an craind
co sciath 7 gái 7 claidium.
amal adchonaircsidhe an anmanda
mór
ut bói isin crund
téit ass for teichedh fo chetóir.
sínis in anmanda a brághait
uadh isin crund
7 fuirmidh a cend a ndruim
daim ba mo donn almui

"(...) they saw a big, awful,
monstrous animal
in a high tree and a drove of herds
and flocks round about the tree
and an armed man near the tree
with shield, spear and sword.
When he saw that big animal

that was in the tree
he went at once in flight from there.
The animal stretched forth its neck
out of the tree
and set its jaws[173] into the back
of the largest ox of the herd

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[172] One could compare the act of tearing out a heart with one's hand and a beheading with the way in which the hero Celtchar mac Uthechar overcomes a monstrous hound (see the Old Irish *Aided Cheltchair maic Uthechair*, 'The Death of Celtchar mac Uthechar', §10; Meyer, 1906/37, pp. 28-9).
[173] Literally: 'set its head'.

7 srengais lais isan crand	and dragged it with him into the tree
7 no n-ithend fo chetoir	and devoured it at once
fri brathadh sula"	in the twinkling of an eye"
(Oskamp, 1970, p. 146)	(*ibid.*, p. 147).

The flocks and the herdsman flee away and probably the voyagers follow their example, for they are in great terror fearing to fall through the sea as thin as mist. The poetry that follows each prose section of this text in this instance calls the beast (*"beist"*) ruthless or wicked (*angbaid*), and mentions that it has pointed ears or horns[174] (*berach, birach*) and hoofs or claws (*basach*).

There are some similarities between the *muirdris* and this animal: the animal is called *bíast* (1); the stretching of the neck and drawing of the ox into the tree could perhaps be compared with the expansion and contraction — although there is no repetition in ICMD (4); both the monsters are large (6) and *úathmar*, horrible (7). However, it is not certain whether the beast from ICMD should be catagorised as a water monster. It is living at the bottom of the sea, but the sea itself is described as a cloud and mist, and the place where the beast lives is a mirror image of land. Considering these things, I conclude that the *muirdris* and the tree beast are significantly different and that therefore the latter cannot be considered to be a variant version of the former.

The following text that has to be dealt with is *Immram curaig Ua Corra*, 'The Voyage of the Uí Chorra's Boat' (ICUC; edition and translation: Stokes, 1893; a more recent edition: Van Hamel, 1941, pp. 96-111, 139-41. The division into sections is from Stokes's edition). The extant text of ICUC is dated to the 11th century (Dumville, 1977-78, p. 70). However, according to Dumville, a version of the *immram* already existed *c.* 900, perhaps even *c.* 800. He argues as follows: the descriptions of Hell in ICUC are characterised by a 'sabbatarian flavour[175]', which is why he thinks that the origin of ICUC should be ascribed to the Céli Dé movement of the 9th century (Dumville, 1976, p. 77, n. 29). He sees a second argument in the fact that the story of ICUC is referred to in a *Litany of Irish Saints* from LL (edition and translation: Plummer, 1925/92, pp. 60-75, see pp. 66-7[176]), which is a text composed *c.* 900 (Dumville, 1976, pp. 78-9). Third, the three names of the Uí Chorra are mentioned in *Félire Óengusso* (FO) for 31 December (the saints Lochán, Endae and Silvester), which Dumville sees as possible evidence of the existence of the story about 800 AD (*ibid.*, p. 88, n. 87). However, if this version existed — which is not at all certain; perhaps the author of ICUC used the names from FO and the *Litany* for the story — it is now lost.

In ICUC three robbers — the Uí Chorra — repent, when one of them

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[174] Hans Oskamp (1970, p. 147) translates 'sharp-backed'.
[175] For more about ICUC and traditions about the observance of Sunday, see 3.3.2.3.
[176] See Hughes (1959) for a commentary on the first part of this litany.

receives a vision[177] in his sleep in which he sees Heaven and Hell (§§13-4). Then they go on a voyage in a boat out of curiosity (§32), but further on into the text an outsider characterises their motivation as religious, namely as a pilgrimage (§34) and, in the conclusion of the text — which is in the form of a poem — the voyage is called a pilgrimage to obtain forgiveness of sins (§77).

First, there is a general reference to the dangers of the sea (§41): the storm of the waves, the roaring of the sea, and the many horrible monsters (*"na hilpiasta adhuathmara"*). Second, in a fiery sea beasts (*"piasta"*) try to pierce the boat (§66). Third, they land on a beautiful island, where they see a sweet-tasting, shining lake *(loch)*. They rest on the island for a week. When they want to depart, a monster *(bíast)* rises from the lake. Everybody expects to be attacked by the beast, but it plunges down again in the same place (§67).

The first instance is too general to draw conclusions from and the piercing beasts are probably a variant version of monsters in VC and will be treated later (in 2.3.2.5). The third episode describes a *píast* (1), living in a loch (2), which is probably horrible (7) as the voyagers are trembling with fear. The *muirdris* and the monster therefore share general characteristics, and the latter is in a very broad sense a variant version of the former.

Two water monsters can be found in the Middle Irish appendix to the Old Irish *Bethu Brigte*, 'Life of Brigit' (ApBB; edition and translation: Ó hAodha, 1978, pp. 1-35; for the date, see *ibid.*, pp. xxv-xxvii, xxix-xxx). In §6 of ApBB an adventure of St Brendan is told. Brendan and his companions are attacked in their boat by a sea monster *(píast)* and defended by another one. The defending monster prays for help, first to St Patrick and the saints of Ireland, and then to St Brendan. This, however, is to no avail. When it prays to St Brigit, the monster overcomes the other, stronger one. In a meeting later on the female saint explains to Brendan that she always thinks of Jesus Christ, to which Brendan admits that it is right that the sea monsters *(bíasta)* praise her above everybody else[178].

This episode seems to be a variant version of NBA §16. In this text, it is St Brendan who prays with the appearance of the second defending monster as the result. The episode in ApBB about St Brigit's superiority may have had a political background in rivalries between monasteries connected with the two saints[179].

The text offers no details about the monsters: they are called *bíastai* (1)

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[177] This vision is designated *fís* in §13 and *aislinge gránda aduathmar*, 'a horrible, dreadful vision/dream', in §14.

[178] There is a variant version of this in the glosses on *Broccán's Hymn* (Stokes, Strachan, 1901-3/75, II, pp. 335-6). There are quite a few differences between the two texts, for instance, St Patrick is not mentioned in the gloss; Brendan's curiosity about the cause of the events is expressed, and Brigit's superiority is more emphasised.

[179] See also 2.1. about ecclesiastical-political concerns in hagiographies.

and live in the sea (2). This general information is of no importance for a
better understanding of EFmL; the text should be seen as a variant version
of NBA §16.

The last text that will be described here is the Middle Irish preface to
the Old Irish *Amra Senáin*, 'Eulogy of Senán' (*p*AS; edition and transla-
tion: Breatnach, 1989, pp. 9, 13, 15; Senán died about 544 AD). Liam
Breatnach (*ibid.*, p. 23) dates the *amra* to the 9th century, or to at least
before 908. The preface consists of prose and poetry (not all manuscripts
have the same quatrains, see *ibid.*, p. 13).

The following story is told in *p*AS: a certain artisan called Nárach
visits St Senán before he makes a journey with his household in order to
ask him for protection against "*in beist boi isin loch*" (*ibid.*, p. 9), 'the
monster which was in the inlet' (*ibid.*, p. 15). The protection is given
('bound') but, this notwithstanding, the artisan and his company are
devoured by the monster. God informs the saint about this. Senán then
summons the beast, slays it and enables the company to emerge from the
monster. The prose ends with a quotation from FO[180]. Then the poetry
version of the story follows, which says that the persecuting monster
swallowed/seized Nárach, here called a smith (*gobha*). Senán goes to the
shore of the blue sea, where he binds the monster from a distance. The
poetry ends with an anecdote that the monster did not spew out everything:
a pan and a hammer are left behind, which makes the monster's mouth
turn white and causes him to spew. This is followed by a remark in prose
about the authorship[181] and cause of *Amra Senáin*.

The monster shares the following aspects with the *muirdris*. It is called
biast (1) and lives in a loch which is a sea inlet/estuary[182] (2); and it
must be huge (6) as it swallows a whole company. In the light of the texts
about water monsters and the movement of water it is interesting to note
that this beast also swallows and spews, but in this case not water. The
beast shares some characteristics with the *muirdris*, but the similarity is
only in a broad sense.

I studied above several kinds of text in order to find monsters that might
have some relation with the *muirdris*. Neither in the Vulgate, nor in non-
canonical scripture, nor in Isidore's *Etymologiae*, nor in Hiberno-Latin,
Old or Middle Irish texts were clues to be found that could lead to a
possible source for the monster in EFmL. There are several variant
versions, though: texts that relate the same story, texts that give compar-
able episodes and monsters that share characteristics. Closest to the story

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[180] For a discussion of the relation between FO and *p*AS, see Breatnach (1989, p.
20).

[181] Like ACC, it is ascribed to Dallán Forgaill. However, according to Breatnach
(1989, pp. 20-3) it was written by the above-mentioned Cormac mac Cuilennáin.

[182] Inis Chathaig, the island where Senán lives, is located in an estuary. The text
refers to the water and uses the word *loch*, which should here be translated as
'inlet of the sea' (see Breatnach, 1989, p. 29, §7 *sub sídlocha*).

told in EFmL are the two texts that mention both Fergus and the monster: the entry in AT and the stanza in Cináed's poem about the Irish heroes. O'Brien was right when he observed that the *sm(e)irdris* might be a late variant of the *muirdris*: the monster that shares most characteristics with the *muirdris* is the *sm(e)irdris* from AnS. The *sm(e)irdris* is connected with a flood, which is sucked up with the aid of another monster, the *súgmaire*. This connection led to the theory in which the repetitive expansion and contraction of the *muirdris* was related to sucking and spewing, and flooding and ebbing, which was interpreted as the symbolisation/personification of the movement of water. Several monsters (from TE/*dindšenchas*, TB, TTA, AnS and AA) were referred to in the reconstruction of the possible development of this theme. Other aspects of the monsters described above might also be connected with aquatic phenomena: the name of the *muirbech* might be translated as 'breaker/breakwater'. Furthermore, the *muirselche* has a *bolc* into which it sucks people and the beast itself ebbs away. The word *muirbolc* means 'sea bay, sea bag', which is a place where tidal water flows in and out of, and which is where the *muirdris*, which is compared with a *bolg*, lives. Modern Irish *boilg* signifies a 'submerged reef', which influences the movement of water. Other water monsters that show some similarity with the *muirdris* (for instance, *muirbech*, *muiriasc*, *muirselche* and several *bestiae* and *biastai*) were described, and sometimes parallellism in the storyline was pointed out (TBF, FB). In VC a Latin equivalent of *píast uiscide* was found. This text also offered an example of a man with a supernatural aspect conquering a monster, a motif also present in EFmL, TBF, FB, TE/ *dindšenchas*, AnS and *p*AS. This motif will return in the next chapter.

The comparison of different monsters from several texts leads to the conclusion that the description of the *muirdris* is native Irish. It might be connected with the symbolisation/personification of the movement of water.

1.3.3 The monster's relation to evil

In EFmL, juridical rules are given which deal with the restoration of balance after the law has been violated or the legal order disturbed. The story refers to the juridical institutions/concepts of *díguin* and *athgabáil*. There is, however, also another layer in the narrative which does not deal with a legal order and juridical rules, but with a supernatural order and supernatural rules. This order is disturbed as well, and has to be restored by a similar mode of compensation.

King Fergus mac Leite does not obey a command given by dwarfs (transgression of a supernatural rule); as a consequence of this he receives a blemish (disturbance of the supernatural order: a sacral king must be physically intact), but human society desires to keep him as their king (again the transgression of a supernatural rule). Although the order remains disturbed for a period, in the end a fatal series of events leads to the restoration of that order: the false kingship is terminated.

It is this extraordinary or religious dimension of EFmL that is central

to this section. The above-mentioned order and rules will be described in the light of the early Irish literary tradition. First I will advert to forms of the supernatural order in early Irish texts (Fate and the Other World), followed by an exposition of supernatural rules connected with this order (the concept of *geis*) and a description of an intermediary between human society and the supernatural order (the sacral king). It is highly important to focus upon the supernatural order and rules, because a disturbance or transgression could be viewed as a form of evil. The section will end with an analysis of the relation between the monster and evil.

The most important religious concept is that of a supernatural order which governs 'life' or the course of events. This concept is common to religious world views in general, where it is maintained that there is more than the empirically perceptible world. 'Behind', 'in', 'above', or 'under' our world is a different Reality:

> "(...) the sense of sanctity appears in all the instances in which the phenomena arouse the awareness of spontaneous factors which are infinite and absolute. Another world invades the world we know, and this other world is an incalculable world which makes all the calculations of ordinary life quite insignificant. In this other world is the mystery of all of life's foundations. By this invasion the entire society can be dislocated and lamed. The infinite and incomprehensible factors in the process of nature, whether they are constructive or destructive, take control and abolish the ordinary order of life with its purposeful expenditure of the forces at man's command. The various tabus which must be observed at such a time are only the recognition and acceptance of this extraordinary situation. The entire society is in a sphere of sanctity, surrounded by unfamiliar and spontaneous powers. No particular god confronts the religious community; the phenomena themselves are sacred and divine" (Kristensen, 1960/68, pp. 22-3).

This 'Other' order can influence our lives; we can try to establish a contact or relation with it; we can feel approached by it (Van Baal, 1960, pp. 13-8). This power belongs to the extraordinary, what is beyond the 'normal' order. It is almost impossible to describe because language cannot adequately express what is experienced. One might call it 'supernatural', although it conveys rather the idea of something 'behind' and 'in' nature than 'above' it. Sometimes people experience something extra 'in' or 'behind' the daily phenomena, which goes beyond ordinary empiricism. An immanent force is perceived in the world, which transcends the normal experience of life. I refer to this concept as 'Other Reality', cosmic or

supernatural order[183].

This Other Reality also plays a role in the early Irish literary tradition. There are two forms that seem to be important in this context. The cosmic order that is basic to the course of life seems to be guarded or guards itself. The supernatural power connected with the maintenance of the cosmic order could be called 'Fate', which is the first relevant form of the Other Reality. The second form is literally the 'Other World', which is inhabited by supernatural beings who may also influence life in the human community. I hope to show here that these elements of the Other Reality are interconnected: supernatural beings from the Other World may impose supernatural rules on humankind. When the rules are broken Fate is activated and re-establishes the cosmic order.

There is a hidden cosmic force which underlies certain institutions that have a supernatural aspect. A hidden power may exist in the utterance of words: for instance, satire can physically damage the person to whom it is addressed[184]. The magical relation which may exist between certain objects, places, moments of time and human beings is expressed by the concept of *geis* (a supernatural rule). Between the king and the land an extraordinary bond exists, which is fundamental to the institution of 'sacral kingship'. These two institutions (*geis* and sacral kingship) are also relevant in the context of EFmL, as will be shown.

I will first deal with the cosmic power that governs life, a power that could be called Fate. There are several words for Fate in early Irish texts. Among the meanings of the verbal noun *cinniud* one can find 'destiny, fate' in DIL. A later form of this verbal noun is *cinnemain*, 'fate, destiny, chance, misfortune'; the verb is *cinnid*, 'defines, fixes, settles; completes, finishes; decides, *i.e.* on a course of action, makes a decision'. Further-

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[183] The concept usually has a specific name in religious systems: it is called *ṛta* in the Indian *Vedas*, *aša* in the Iranian *Avesta*; *Ma'at* is the name of the ancient Egyptian law of the earth and universe and *tao* is the Chinese conception of the cosmic order (for more about this, see Kristensen, 1960/68, pp. 29-34. See also Wagner, 1970, and Watkins, 1979, who see *fír* (*flatha/flathemon*) as the Irish equivalents. More about this below).

[184] See, for instance, *Gaire*, '(...) short life', in *Sanas Cormaic* (nr. 698; edition: Meyer, 1912, pp. 58-60; (Dutch) translation: Draak, De Jong, 1990, pp. 96-9). This text gives several examples of the workings of the hidden cosmic force. A king is asked for a gift by his foster-son who wants to take the king's place. The king is not able to give the particular object as this is *geis* to him. Then the foster-son utters a satire (*áer*) with many allusions to death. The satire produces three blisters on the face of the king, which render him unfit for kingship (see below) with the foster-son becoming king. In the end the satire has its more fatal effect: the former king dies of shame. However, the foster-son's fate is linked up with that of the victim: when the latter dies a rock bursts and ignites and a piece of stone enters the former's head. This makes him unfit for kingship as well, although the text does not make this explicit. But I believe that this is an example of how the effect of a satire that is unjust or false may turn against the one who uttered it.

more, there is the verbal noun *tocad* (Early Old Irish: *toceth*), 'fortune, chance (…)', of the verb *tocaid*, 'destines' (cp. the Middle Welsh word for Fate: *tynged*). Related to this is *toicthiu*, 'fortune, chance (…)'. Finally, there is a loan word from Latin: *fátal*, 'fate, lot (?)'. It is derived from *fátále* (Meyer, 1914, p. 945). This loan word does not occur as often as the other terms: Meyer (*ibid.*) only gives three examples. A detailed study of these words should be made to gain a deeper insight into this concept, but such a study would be beyond this dissertation's scope. In its stead I will examine and discuss two important publications written on the subject, one by Edward J. Gwynn and another by Anton G. van Hamel.

Gwynn (1910) describes Fate as a metaphysical guiding or driving power that marks out the course of life for human beings and determines their goal independent of their will[185]. Gwynn starts with a survey of Irish words that could come into consideration as describing this phenomenon and concludes that there is no word for this concept to be found in early Irish texts[186]. It should be noted that DIL was not available to him, as this dictionary was written between 1913 and 1976.

This conclusion notwithstanding, Gwynn is convinced that the idea existed. He builds his argument on two grounds: first, by referring to the related term *trú*, 'a doomed person, one who is fey[187]' (*ibid.*, pp. 154-5), and second, by describing several motifs in early Irish heroic tales on the basis of which one can assume the underlying principle of Fate as governing and superior power (*ibid.*, pp. 155-63).

The word *trú* is used for someone who is under the sentence of Fate. Such a person is literally 'marked': some people are able to recognise this

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[185] I composed this description from scattered remarks on p. 152 of the article (Gwynn, 1910).

[186] Gwynn (1910, p. 152) dismisses several terms (*dáil, dán, gearróg* and *cionnradarc*), which he took from a Modern Irish Dictionary (O'Neill Lane's English — Irish Dictionary, *s.v.* 'fate', 'destiny'), because a metaphysical notion is absent in them. Then he mentions the word "*cinneamuin*" from *Compert Mongáin ocus Serc Duibe-Lacha do Mongán*, 'The Conception of Mongán and Mongán's Love for Dub Lacha' (edition: Meyer, Nutt, 1895, I, pp. 58-70; translation: *ibid.*, pp. 70-84; see §3 for the reference to Fate. See Mac Cana, 1980, p. 78, about the translation of the second part of the title), which does give an example of the metaphysical concept of 'Fate'. However, Gwynn rejects the reference because the text belongs to a comparatively late period. (According to Gwynn (*ibid.*, pp. 152-3) the text is Late Middle Irish, but Alfred Nutt (Meyer, Nutt, 1897, II, p. 11) dates it to the (13th or) 14th century.) Gwynn furthermore gives another word which was supposed to signify Destiny, namely "*fáil*" (genitive) used in *lia fáil*, 'stone of *fál*', *inis fáil*, 'island of *fál*', and *fir fáil*, 'man of *fál*'. He dismisses this too: in his opinion *Fál* is an old name for Ireland (*ibid.*, pp. 153-4; compare DIL, *s.v.* 5. *fál*, 'name of the stone at Temair (Tara) said to have been brought to Ireland by the Tuatha Dé Danann, and generally known as the Lia Fáil; a name of Ireland').

[187] DIL gives as second, more general meaning 'wretch, miserable person; villain, blackguard'.

doom in that it is either audible[188] or visible[189] to them. However, the person who is *trú* is usually unaware of these signs. Gwynn puts it like this:

"As a rule the doomed man himself has no apprehension of his condition; he frequently exhibits a certain obstinacy and intractability, and insists on rushing upon his fate. *Ropad do iroic*, "a warning to one who is doomed," is a proverb for waste of labour. Sometimes he may even display an unnatural exaltation, which is to others a sign of coming tragedy" (*ibid.*, p. 155[190]).

Fate overrules everything: there is no escape in either resistance or warning. Gwynn mentions one instance where a person different from the doomed one seems to take the burden of being fated upon himself: a jester sees that his master — a warrior — is *lommthrú*, 'doomed', and going into battle dressed as his employer he is killed instead[191]. Gwynn concludes: "Fate is satisfied apparently to accept a life for a life" (*ibid.*, p. 157).

The signs of fatality sometimes show just before Fate 'strikes' and at other times they are seen a long time in advance: "The shadow is sometimes seen to lie upon a life from its beginning; the steps of approaching fate may be counted in their gradual march" (*ibid.*, p. 157). Gwynn mentions the hero Cú Chulainn as an example of someone whose whole life is

[188] A blind druid hears from the speech of a man that his death is near (*Cath Maige Muccrama*, 'The Battle of Mag Muccrama' (CMM), §40: "(...) *at-géoin (immorro) in druí for labrad Éogain ropa(d) trú*" (O Daly, 1975, p. 50), '(...) the druid recognised from Éogan's speech that he was doomed' (*ibid.*, p. 51). Máirín O Daly (*ibid.*, p. 18) dates the language of the text to the earlier half of the 9th century.

[189] For instance, a poetess with the power of prophecy (*imbas forosna*) is asked in TBC Rec. I: "*A Feidelm banfáith, co acci in slúag?*" (O'Rahilly, 1976a, p. 2, l. 48), 'O prophetess Feidelm, how do you see the army?'. Her answer is the same four times: she sees it very red (*forderg*), red (*rúad; ibid.*, p. 2, ll. 50, 55, 60, 65).

[190] As an example of a king with a mood unsuitable for the occasion Gwynn refers to *Cath Maighe Rátha*, 'The Battle of Mag Ráth' (CMR1; see O'Donovan, 1842, pp. 166-7). This is the long version, dated to the late 13th or even the 14th century (Dillon, 1953-55, p. 201). There is also an earlier short version, which is Middle Irish and might be dated to the 10th century (CMR2, see *ibid.*; edition and translation: Marstrander, 1911), but the motif of exaltation while being doomed is absent in this older text.

[191] CMM §12: After some words of the warrior (Lugaid mac Con) in which he expresses his expectation to be overthrown in battle (CMM §11), the fool reacts in the following way: "'*N[i] matáet fort béolu*', ar in drúth, '*at lomthrú*'" (O Daly, 1975, p. 42), '[Such words] come ill on your lips', said the jester, 'you are utterly doomed' (*ibid.*, p. 43).

marked by Fate[192].

Finally, Gwynn analyses three texts about heroes destined to die by Fate: Cú Chulainn in *Brislech mór Maige Muirtheimne*, 'The Great Rout of Mag Muirthemne' (BMMM; edition: Best, O'Brien, 1956, II, pp. 442-57; translation: Tymoczko, 1981, pp. 37-83; dated to the 11th century; Thurneysen, 1921/79, p. 549), Cormac Conloinges in *Bruiden Da Chocae*, 'Da Choca's Hall' (BDC; edition and translation: Stokes, 1900b; dated to the 12th century by Ó Corráin, 1994, pp. 10-1, on historical and by Gregory Toner, 1990, p. 86, on linguistic grounds), and Conaire Mór in TBDD. The tales have two things in common, Gwynn (1910, pp. 158-63) observes: first, the breaking of *gessi*[193]; second, the appearance of a supernatural woman who is connected with battle and bloodshed (the Morrígan or the Badb). Gwynn characterises these supernatural women as ministers and attendants of Fate (*ibid.*, pp. 163, 165). He comes to the conclusion that certain acts have fatal consequences, causing enmity in both supernatural persons and human beings "gifted with exceptional powers" (*ibid.*, p. 164). According to Gwynn, the fatal agency has no moral aspect in Irish sagas, or at least the morality is not emphasised (*ibid.*).

These two observations of Gwynn — Fate is connected with supernatural rules (*gessi*) and with supernatural beings — are important in relation to EFmL. I believe that the supernatural rule in EFmL is the interdiction about the loch, which is imposed upon Fergus by supernatural beings: the dwarfs (see below). Fergus transgresses the rule and thereby activates Fate. He is now *trú*, 'doomed', and this is visible: the shadow of Fate can be seen upon his face, forecasting his end. Fergus himself seems to be unaware that he is fey. As described above, after his first encounter with the monster he surfaces from the forbidden water and asks his servant: *cia cuimacci*, 'how do you see me?', or: 'what do you inspect?' Binchy (see note 68) suggests a comparison of this question with the one asked by Queen Medb of the prophetess Feidelm in TBC Rec. I, when she wants to know how Feidelm sees the army: *co acci in slúag*? (see note 189). There is also a difference in that everybody can see the blemish on Fergus's face, whereas Feidelm is the only one who sees the army in red. Fergus receives a straightforward answer from Muena: he looks bad (*Is olc do gné.* Cp.

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[192] For instance, when he is a young boy he overhears a conversation between the druid Cathbad and his pupils. Cathbad says that that very day is of good omen for the taking up of arms. When the druid sees the boy brandishing the arms given to him by the king, he expresses his view that this means bad luck. It turns out that the omen contained some extra information: "*Is maith ane in láa,*" ol Cathbad. "*Is glé bid airdairc 7 bid animgnaid intí gébas gaisced and acht bid duthain nammá*" (O'Rahilly, 1976a, p. 20, ll. 638-9), '"It is indeed a day of good omen [Lit.: 'The day is indeed good', JB]," said Cathbad. "It is certain that he who takes up arms today will be famous and renowned, but he will, however, be short-lived."' (*ibid.*, p. 143). Cú Chulainn, incidentally, could not care less: fame is much more important to him than living long.

[193] Gwynn supplied several Greek parallels of the motifs described in this article, but of the motif of breaking *gessi* he could not give any (1910, p. 165).

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1.2.1). This could perhaps be compared with the sentence *is olc ataí-siu indiu* in the following quotation from TBC LL, which gives another instance of the visibility of Fate. Cú Chulainn notices this doom from the appearance of his opponent and foster-brother Fer Diad:

"Rachondaic Cú Chulaind	"Cú Chulainn saw
mídelb 7 míthemel mór in lá sin bar	that Fer Diad had an ill and gloomy
Fer Diad.	appearance on that day.
'Is olc ataí-siu indiu,	'Your appearance is not good today,
a Fir Diad,'	Fer Diad,'
bar Cú Chulaind.	said Cú Chulainn.
'Ra dorchaig th'folt indiu	'Your hair has grown dark today
7 ra suamnig do rosc	and your eye dull,
7 dachúaid do chruth 7 do delb	and you are changed from your usual
7 do dénam dít'"	form and figure'"
(O'Rahilly, 1967, p. 88, l. 3179-83)	(*ibid.*, p. 224).

After Fer Diad's answer Cú Chulainn announces in poetry his foster-brother's doom, using the word *lomthrú*:

"A Fir Dïad, mása thú,	"'O Fer Diad, if this is you,
demin limm isat lomthrú (...)"	sure I am that you are one utterly
(O'Rahilly, 1967, p. 88, ll. 3188-9)	doomed (...)'"
	(*ibid.*, p. 225).

Fergus, however, is not told that he is doomed. His 'loss of face' is kept hidden from him. Therefore, what Gwynn observes about the shadow of Fate which may lie upon a person for a long time in advance, is also true in Fergus's case. Only after seven (or three) years does something happen which makes the doom explicit.

Gwynn mentions the matter of supernatural women as attendants and ministers of Fate. In EFmL it is a human woman who verbally expresses the king's condition. Again the power of uttering certain words is highly important (cp. the effect of satire mentioned above). It is as if Fergus's doom has been dormant during seven or three years, depending on the manuscript version, but because of its verbal expression by the woman Fate is activated again. Or perhaps it should be viewed like this: the reign was not effectively false until this was verbally enunciated by Dorn. Without a formal announcement the situation was in a kind of limbo[194]. I will return to this later (see 1.3.4).

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[194] One could compare this aspect of verbal expression with an episode in CMM §§63-66: when the king (Lugaid mac Con) pronounces a wrong verdict, he is corrected by a little boy (his foster-son Cormac). After the recognition of the true judgment, verbally expressed by the people present, the disasters take place: one side of the house collapses and the land becomes infertile. After a year Lugaid is expelled from kingship.

Finally, Gwynn's remark about some acts having fatal consequences; his impression that the morality in these cases is not emphasised, and his idea of compensation which seems to be basic to the workings of Fate ('a life for a life') are also important in the context of EFmL. To me it seems that this complex of cause and effect should perhaps be seen as having its origin in a view of the world which supposes that there is a balance (order) in the way things are. Then imbalance (chaos) is brought about by a certain act, and finally, the balance is re-established by another event/act based on the principle 'an eye for an eye[195]'.

The idea of compensation plays an important part in early Irish texts. One can find it as a basic idea of justice in legal and narrative contexts. As mentioned above, one could consider as legal examples some institutions from EFmL: the compensation of *díguin* by giving up land, gold and silver, with the special situation where a body (Dorn's) has to be supplied for a body (the son of the foreign man and Dorn) and finally, the restoring of the land to its former owners as compensation for the killing of Dorn. Other examples in narrative contexts are, for instance, the expressions 'a destruction for a destruction' in TBDD[196] and 'an eye for an eye' and 'a head for a head' in CMR2[197]. These references apply to relations between human beings, but the idea of compensation is not restricted to the human sphere. Tomás Ó Cathasaigh (1980-81) has shown that in CMM this idea is found in the expression 'one *lommrad* (the act of laying bare) for another', and that this is also valid for contacts between beings from the supernatural world and human beings[198]. For all beings who figure in the texts it seems to be true that the course of events is governed by Fate,

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[195] This view of the world is not limited to Ireland. This line of thought is, for instance, also present in the Old Testament, Ex 21:23-25: "(...) *reddet animam pro anima oculum pro oculo dentem pro dente manum pro manu pedem pro pede adustionem pro adustione vulnus pro vulnere livorem pro livore*", '(...) one shall render a life for a life, an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, a hand for a hand, a foot for a foot, a burning for a burning, a wound for a wound, a bruise for a bruise'. (See also Lv 24:20; Dt 19:21. The idea is, incidentally, contradicted in Matthew's antitheses, cp. Mt 5:38ff. For more about these texts, see Schuman, 1993, pp. 9, 447-58.)
[196] TBDD §48: "(...) *orcain fon orgain do-rad dúnn*" (Knott, 1936/63, p. 13), 'A destruction for the destruction he has given us' (Stokes, 1901a, p. 48), and §66: "*Ba hé orgain fón aile*" (Knott, 1936/63, p. 18), '(...) there should be one Destruction for another' (Stokes, 1901a, p. 168). A literal translation of the last sentence is: 'Let him be a destruction for another', meaning: Let him be the one who is destroyed in return for the other.
[197] See Marstrander (1911, pp. 234-5, 246-7). The first reference is not given literally: the people of Ulster demand the eye of the son of the king of Tara, when his foster-son from Ulster (Congall Cáech, see below) has been stung by one of the king's bees in his eye. The second reference literally gives 'a head for a head' but it is not very clear what is meant by it.
[198] "(...) this principle holds true alike for men and for the denizens of the Other-world when they make unwarranted encroachments on the others' domain" (Ó Cathasaigh, 1980-81, p. 220).

which is activated by imbalance and, inevitably, Fate has its way until the balance is restored. Any creature involved can be used as an instrument of Fate in order to reach this goal.

At this point I would like to introduce another concept which is highly important regarding the workings of Fate. One of the places in EFmL where the idea of compensation can be found is in the encounter between the dwarf and the king where the dwarf says: *anmain i n-anmain*, 'a life for a life' (EFmL §§4-5). The sentence is a formula uttered when some kind of contract is made in which a balance of power is established[199]. This contract is called in EFmL *anacul*[200] and *fír fer* (cp. note 60 and see also O'Leary, 1987a). The word that is important here is *fír*, 'what is true; truth, right; a pledge, guarantee; an attestation: a proof, test, ordeal; right, due'. The abstract notion of truth/justice is linked up with the cosmic order. The cosmic order is called 'Truth' by Wolfgang Meid (1990, pp. 29-30[201]). Meid describes the early Irish world view as one in which human acts stand in a causal connection with those of Nature[202]. According to him, 'Truth' is the natural order of the world; the elements are its guarantors[203] and human life is subject to it. Human behaviour which is

[199] Other examples can be found in FB §87 (referred to above, see 1.3.2); *Táin bó Regamain*, 'The Cattle Raid of Regamon', §2 (Stokes, Windisch, 1887, II.2, pp. 225-38, see pp. 227, 234-5; the text is dated to the 9th century; Thurneysen, 1921/79, p. 667); the second version of *Compert Conchobuir*, 'The Conception of Conchobor' (Meyer, 1883-85, pp. 174-82, see pp. 175, 179; dated to the 10th-11th centuries; Thurneysen, 1921/79, p. 274), and TE §71 (Van Hamel, 1933/78, p. 52; Meyer, 1888, p. 300). In these examples a sword is drawn, sometimes against an evidently weaker party and then the deal/contract is usually (not in every manuscript) initiated by the threatened party by saying *anmain i n-anmain* (not so, however, in TE) and concluded by the asking and granting of *trí drinnroisc*.

[200] *Anacul* also occurs in another encounter between a large and a small man: *Comracc Conchulaind re Senbecc hua n-Ebricc a Segais*, 'The combat of Cú Chulainn with Senbecc, grandson of Ebrecc, from Segais' (Meyer, 1883-85, pp. 182-4; dated to the 11th century; Thurneysen, 1921/79, p. 490). Here, Cú Chulainn takes a small man (Senbecc) in a little boat in his hand. Among the things the little man offers in order to be spared are his cloak (*brat*) and shirt which fit everybody and which protect, among other things, against drowning. This could perhaps be seen as a later version of the motif of the *brat* of the dwarf in EFmL §5.

[201] See also Wagner (1970) and Watkins (1979).

[202] This world view is not limited to the early Irish; for many more examples from different cultures, see Douglas (1966/91).

[203] P.L. Henry (1966, pp. 190-4) earlier drew attention to the elements as cosmic guarantors and arbiters of human pledges and commitments in early Irish literature. "The power of the elements which constitute the material world and their place in the ordering of human life is reflected in the Gaulish and Irish custom of invoking them as guarantees with powers of retribution" (*ibid.*, p. 190). See Henry (1966, pp. 190-4; 1972, pp. 137-42) for examples of texts in which the elements have this function.

not in accordance with this Truth calls forth the 'wrath' of the elements, which amounts to drought, floods, pestilence, crop failure, famine, discord, and war. These disasters are viewed as evidence that by untrue human thoughts[204], speech and acts the Truth (i.e. moral, justice and order[205]) has been offended. Therefore, acting according to the Truth is very important in the early Irish world view. Meid mentions two kinds of truth: one for warriors — *fír ngaiscid*, 'the truth of arms' (which means 'fair play' in fighting[206]), — and one for rulers — *fír flatha*, 'the rule(r)'s truth[207]'.

Perhaps it is more illuminating to consider *fír* as related to the religious ethical norms in early Irish texts. *Fír* is something according to which one can and should live: an ethical demand which has cosmological resonances/effects. Being in balance with the cosmic order means living in line with the truth. If one does not, Fate is activated causing consequent disaster as a retribution for the discordance with *fír*. Perhaps one could say that *fír* is a law of the cosmos, which has Fate as its guardian. I will return to *fír* in the context of sacral kingship.

Van Hamel studied the cosmic order in early Irish texts as well. He says (1934b, p. 29) that the supernatural power which determines and limits human life[208] may be called, in the absence of a particular form, 'Fate'. Van Hamel describes the Celtic view of the world as "a chain of conditioned magic" where "one broken link means an inevitable catastrophe" (1936, p. 210[209]). He also mentions *geis* in this context — saying that even the breaking of a *geis* is fated (*ibid.*). Van Hamel does not often refer to sources to prove his line of argument in this article and the 19th-

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[204] One could wonder if this reference to 'thoughts' is correct. As argued above, the verbal expression of the truth seems to be highly important.

[205] Literally: "*Sitte, Recht und Ordnung*" (Meid, 1990, p. 29).

[206] See DIL *s.v. fír ngaiscid*. Cp. *fír fer*.

[207] *Flaith* means both 'rule' and 'ruler'. DIL gives *s.v. fír flatha* 'the word of a prince; justice of a ruler'. Cp. also *fír nDé*, 'the judgment of God' (literally: 'the truth/justice of God').

[208] Van Hamel (1934b, p. 29) considers this idea of a supernatural power as a general trait of primitive religion. I object to this: first, one should not speak of 'primitive' religion, because this term was used in the evolutionary view on religion (which also emerges in other passages in Van Hamel's article) which is outdated and incorrect. The problem with this view is that it "left insufficient scope for the possibility of divergent lines of development, and neglected the effect of specific historical events by overstressing the regularity of cultural evolution" (Van Baal, Van Beek, 1971/85, p. 59). Second, as far as I can see belief in a supernatural power which determines and limits life seems to be a characteristic of religion in general.

[209] In this article entitled "The Conception of Fate in Early Teutonic and Celtic Religion" Van Hamel (1936), however, seems to be more preoccuppied with the concept of 'God(s)' than that of 'Fate'.

century concept of evolutionism is obvious in it[210]. In any case, what he calls 'a chain of conditioned magic' is what I call the power and influence of the cosmic force. It is important that he connects disruption to the order with consequent disaster. The breaking of a *geis* is of course such 'a broken link', which he considers to be governed by Fate as well.

The first form of the Other Reality in early Irish texts, then, is the cosmic order which 'demands' of people that they be in line with the truth (*fír*). If they are not, a cosmic force is set free, perhaps 'guided' by Fate, which brings about the re-establishment of the supernatural order. The second form of the Other Reality is the 'Other World'. One may find the latter on islands in the sea or across water, under water, via a *síd* (a pre-Celtic grave mound or megalithic tumulus or a natural mound), or through a thick fog (Edel, 1986, p. 101). There is no Heaven or empire of the Gods high above the earth or a Hell or empire of the dead deep down below. Supernatural beings, however, do exist; they are sometimes called *áes síde*, 'the people of the fairy mounds', which is where they may live (for more about them see, for instance, Draak, 1977, pp. 25-42).

What at first sight seems to be 'our' world then appears to be something different: sometimes a hill is not just a hill because it is inhabited by the *áes síde*; or an island is not just an island as immortal beings dwell there. The rule of conduct for humans is: avoid these places; they are beyond you and before you know it you are in deep trouble. Generally, it is best to leave the *áes síde* in peace as well although they

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[210] Van Hamel reconstructs the following evolution in religious thinking: first there was a magic view of the world with no individual Gods but completely governed by Fate ("purely fatalistic"; Van Hamel, 1936, p. 210). This view is found among "the Celts" *(ibid.)*. He compares this with the Teutonic peoples who used to have a magic view of the world with a "grim and primitive aspect" *(ibid., p. 211)*. But this view was "gradually obscured" by a belief in individual Gods who with "a supreme potency (...) free the world from the bonds of blind necessity" *(ibid.)*. The only fatality that remains is death, which is later on vanquished by the Christian religion *(ibid., p. 214)*. This reconstruction does not seem to be based upon sources, but upon *a priori* presuppositions about religion. It will suffice to point out a few examples. "The belief in gods precludes fatalism", he maintains *(ibid., p. 211)*. One could object that, for instance, Greek Gods not only cooperated with but were also subject to Fate (see for instance, the *Iliad* 18.115-120). He also has a problem with the death of Gods, which at the same time he sees as "logical" and as an error: "The death of the gods is but the inevitable consequence of the primary error which lies in the attempted conciliation of theism and the fatality of death". The latter would be a 'survival' of an earlier stratum *(ibid., p. 213)*. His expressions and way of reasoning (religious beliefs as errors in rational thought) are part of this above-mentioned outdated view on religion (see Van Baal, Van Beek, 1971/85, pp. 30-63). The death of Gods is a familiar motif in several mythologies of different religions (for instance, Osiris, Tammuz and Adonis die; see Bleeker, 1952/61, pp. 87-9, 93-4, 95-6). I believe that more research is needed to deal with the concepts of Fate and theism: evolutionism is too narrow in scope.

sometimes seek contact with the human world, for instance when they want a human lover. Obviously, they exist outside the human community, but there are times and occasions when these two worlds are open to each other.

This Other World is immanent and the borders between the 'ordinary' one and the extraordinary places where the supernatural beings appear and/or live are fluid. It should be noted that, recently, Patrick Sims-Williams (1990, pp. 63-4) has objected to the modern abstraction of '*the* Otherworld' as he terms it, which, according to him, may have its origin in the Christian dichotomy of this and the next world[211]. As there are many names for and images of the Other World in early Irish texts, his suggestion of referring to "multiple Irish Otherworlds" (*ibid.*, p. 69) makes sense. On the other hand, one could argue that these multiple supernatural places are distinct from the human world which is why one could term them 'the Other World[212]'. I will use the term in this broad sense and even extend it to places where extraordinary beings are found without a reference to a traditional Irish name for the Other World in the text. I do this because I believe that the vagueness of the borders between the ordinary and the extraordinary is a highly important characteristic of early Irish texts. Having said that, a certain distinction can, at the same time, be noticed between the ordinary and the extraordinary. I will make this explicit concerning EFmL[213].

Fergus meets with dangers posed by beings who do not belong to the human order. The dwarfs try to kidnap him but just in time he is able to get something, a supernatural gift, out of them. Fergus did not seek this contact with them; the loch with its dangerous inhabitant, however, he enters on his own initiative. At the sight of the monster in the first encounter the king becomes frightened and flees. This confrontation disrupts the

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[211] One could wonder whether this dichotomy is not the result of modern studies of religion where the distinction between 'our' and 'the other' reality/world is widely in and of use.

[212] Carey (1991) also sees validity in the term 'Otherworld' and draws upon Hiberno-Latin traditions to argue for its legitimacy. After discussing relevant texts, he concludes: "(...) the word *orbis* could be applied to the realm of the immortals and the dead, a nether region corresponding to the *síde* of vernacular tradition. Such a usage seems to reflect an idea that the supernatural reality revealed by journeys beneath or across earth or water is essentially unitary, however diverse our means of reaching it may be; (...) the identification of the Otherworld with the southern hemisphere may have been a deliberate strategy for accommodating the paradoxical multiplicity of supernatural locations attested in the sagas" (*ibid.*, p. 158).

[213] This treatment of the concept of the Other World is of course superficial and unsatisfactory as I have, for instance, not even raised the subject of Christian influence upon this concept. However, it is beyond this study's scope to elaborate further upon it. Instead, I refer to studies made by, for instance, Patch (1950), Ó Cathasaigh (1977-79), Mac Mathúna (1985), Carey (1982-83, 1989a, 1990, 1991), and Sims-Williams (1990).

order: the kingship becomes unstable, false, because of the blemish (see below). The human response to this is at first denial. But later on, when the king has come around to another view of the situation, a second encounter follows. This second confrontation, also on Fergus's initiative, is active: the *muirdris* and the king perish in mutual combat.

Even though Fergus is threatened in tangible ways, in the background to the story invisible forces play their part in leading the king to his downfall. These dangerous forces — either tangible or invisible — that relate to Fergus's ruin can be seen at three levels: the perceptible reality, the perceptible 'other' reality, and the invisible 'other' reality.

In the first instance there are the places that appear to be dangerous: the sea, where Fergus is almost kidnapped and the loch, where he is disfigured and finally dies[214]. This first level is the perceptible reality.

The second level is the appearance of beings who are perceived, but who do not belong to 'our world'. These are, first, the 'little bodies', the *lúchorpáin*. Although they are not said to belong to the *áes síde* they do not belong to the human world either; they are extraordinarily small and have magical charms at their disposal. Furthermore, they have special knowledge: they refer to the mysterious loch and utter a prohibition upon it. Another sign of the *lúchorpáin* as being extraordinary might be their association with water as they seem to come from the sea and want to take Fergus there. Moreover, the medieval etymologies of the words for 'dwarf' confirm the association with water. *Cormac's Glossary* (Meyer, 1912, p. 9; O'Donovan, Stokes, 1868, p. 13) connects *"abac"* with *ab* and *abann*[215], 'river', saying that *abac* is a small being living in a river. The same etymological explanation can be found in *O'Mulconry's Glossary*, which is an Old Irish compilation with a few articles of Middle Irish origin (Mac Neill, 1932, p. 119): *"abacc"* is explained from *ab* (Stokes, 1900c, p. 235[216]). In this glossary the *lúchorpáin* are linked with water as well. It says: *"Luchorp .i. oirb locha"* (*ibid.*, p. 270), thus characterising them as '(the) heirs of a loch'. Perhaps one could see them as guardians of the water, at least in EFmL where they appear near the sea and give Fergus 'permission' to visit the world under water by bestowing upon him the ability to explore lochs, pools and seas. At the same time, they also have knowledge about one loch that is dangerous, at least for Fergus, and by expressing the interdiction they are securing the balance, thereby perhaps protecting both the king and the monster. In addition to these dwarfs, there is a second representation of a being not belonging to 'our' world: the monster, hidden under water till it is discovered by a man using a charm and capable of visiting the deep. The 'other' reality to which the dwarfs and the monster belong is not radically separate from 'normal' reality: the

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[214] These two episodes are both near or in water — the sea and the loch — and they are linked by the *geis*.
[215] It is also connected with *á* and *ard*, 'height' (Meyer, 1912, p. 9; O'Donovan, Stokes, 1868, p. 13).
[216] See also Mac Neill (1932, p. 120).

boundaries between the two worlds are 'fluid'.

The third level is that of the invisible forces, governing the course of life. I will exemplify this after the description of *geis* and sacral kingship.

In early Irish heroic texts good and evil do not seem to depend on principles of justice and charity, but they are connected with acts that do or do not endanger the human community. The directive is not: "Act rightly, whatever the outcome", but: "You have acted rightly, if the outcome is right and no bad portent occurs" (Draak, 1969, pp. 640-1). The ethical code appears to be: one should act according to the traditions and customs of one's community and consistent with one's social status and personal *gessi*, 'tabus' (*ibid.*, p. 641).

Geis is a central notion in early Irish texts. Van Hamel gives a definition of this concept:

> "The Irish *geis* is a magical injunction or a prohibition resting on a
> person or an object, the violation of which will conjure up the ven-
> geance of a superhuman power" (1934b, p. 27).

The aim of the injunction or prohibition[217] is the protection of the cosmic order, based on the truth. This order is undisturbed when *gessi* are maintained. In this way, *geis* also protects the person upon whom the injunction or prohibition has been laid, as every person is linked with the cosmic order. An accident, for instance, happens in a certain place and under certain conditions. The native Irish way of dealing with this was to avoid this location or any of these circumstances in future (Draak, 1959, p. 662) and formulate a *geis* concerning this particular danger. In this way one can consider *geis* as the Irish variant of the phenomenon that is usually designated with the Polynesian word *tabu*:

> "*Geis*, like all taboo, is a means of defining and thereby restricting
> and to some extent controlling danger" (O'Leary, 1988, p. 86).

The use of the term 'vengeance' in Van Hamel's definition needs to be elaborated upon, because it conveys the idea of the personification of a superhuman power. It is important here to distinguish again between the supernatural entities in early Irish texts. If one wants to refer to the supernatural power called 'Fate' (which is the case in Van Hamel's definition) then one should be aware that this is something more like an anonymous impersonal power; a 'blind' force acting as a law of nature, albeit a capricious one. If one breaks a *geis* Fate will 'strike', but how and when is something one has to await. This is not something that should be

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[217] For an explanation of how *geis* can signify both an interdiction and an injuncti-on, thereby being a word with an opposite meaning/function, see Meid (1979-80).

categorised as 'revenge' but more as 'cause and effect[218]'.

However, if one refers to the acts of the *aes síde* then 'revenge' may be the appropriate term. In his analysis of the texts about three heroes whose deaths are destined by Fate (see above), Gwynn (1910, pp. 159-63) attempts to show how revenge is an important motif in this. One of his examples is Conaire Mór, who, according to Gwynn, is innocent[219] in the course of events leading towards his downfall. There is indeed a version that ascribes this tragic fate of King Conaire to the doings of a relative of his for which persons from the Other World take revenge upon Conaire. This refers to the conflict between his great-grandfather Eochaid and the supernatural Midir over a woman called Étaín. In the version that seems to come from the lost Book of Druim Snechta it says after mentioning Conaire, the great-grandson of Eochaid:

"Is ed	"That (i.e. the fact that he was descended from Echaid) was what
fodrúair a orcain hi	caused him to be killed for the
cinta Echdach,	crimes of Echaid,
ar is áes side	for it is the beings from the *síd*
Breg Leith	of Brí Léith
dorinólsat in n-orgain	who mustered (for) the slaying
fo bíth tonaidbecht forro a síd	because their *síd* had been broken up
oc cuinchid Étaíne la Echdaig"	by Echaid as he sought Étaín"
(Ó Cathasaigh, 1990, pp. 106-7)	(*ibid.*, p. 107).

Gwynn points out that:

"(...) Brí Léith is the home of Midir, and it was thence that Eochaid regained Etáin by force. Further, these same authorities [the version from the lost Book of Druim Snechta is meant by this, JB] speak of the *Tochmarc Etáine* [the story about the conflict over the woman, JB] as a foretale to the *Bruden Dá Derga*. Here then is the clue to the right understanding of the tragedy of Conaire's death. The sea-reavers are merely instruments of the vengeance of Midir. The violation of Conaire's *gessa* is caused by his agency. Conaire himself is innocent, but is sacrificed to the feud between his grandfather and Midir" (Gwynn, 1910, p. 162).

In this tale the order seems to be disrupted on three counts: first, the

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[218] One could compare this with Margaret Mead's definition of *tabu*: "a prohibition whose infringement results in an automatic penalty without human or superhuman mediation" quoted by David Greene (1979, p. 9) as (in some cases) corresponding with *geis*. This definition seems to rule out a supernatural interference but at the same time the words 'prohibition', 'infringement', and 'penalty' point out that there is something extraordinary about this concept of cause and effect.
[219] Máirín O Daly (1968/85, p. 114) and Tomás Ó Cathasaigh (1977-79, pp. 145-6) express a different opinion on this. For more about this, see below.

conflict between Conaire's ancestor and the *áes síde*; second, Conaire
pronouncing a false judgment which damages the supernatural basis of
kingship (*fír flatha*, see below) and third, Conaire breaking his *gessi*. One
can see in this text how closely linked the different forms of the Other
Reality are. The power of the people of the Other World is connected with
the supernatural basis of kingship. They bestow the kingship upon Conaire
(TBDD §13). Ó Cathasaigh (1977-79, p. 142) describes this as follows:

> "(...) the young Conaire is instructed by Nemglan, 'the king of
> your father's birds', and, having acted accordingly, Conaire is pro-
> claimed king. Thus, it is the bird-man — clearly an Otherworld
> personage — who calls Conaire to his destiny as king. Nemglan
> lays a number of injunctions (or 'taboos') upon Conaire, and these
> constitute in effect a contract with the Otherworld. So long as
> Conaire observes these injunctions his reign (*ind énflaith* 'the bird-
> reign') is prodigiously prosperous, being marked by abundance, by
> peace and amity among his people, and by good weather".

However, the revenge of other representatives from the Other World take
it away from him. The *gessi* are closely linked with the start and the ruin
of Conaire's kingship.

In early Irish narratives *geis* is an important theme leading up to heroic
action or (when broken) to tragedy. David Greene (1979, p. 11) points out
that the concept of *geis* is only to be found in this genre of literature; there
is no trace of it in either the laws or the *Annals*[220]. Although the system
of compensation can, for instance, also be found in the laws, here related
ideas are expressed by using the terms of status and honour (*enech*).
Greene believes (*ibid.*, p. 9) that there are two meanings of *geis*: first, a
description of what is appropriate to a person's status, and second, a
positive obligation imposed by one person upon another. The second form
he sees as 'only' a literary device, thereby quoting with approval James
Carney: "an author's lazy method of motivating action" (*ibid.*); the first as
having a deeper anthropological sense. The problem here of course is that
the texts arguably describe beliefs belonging to the pre-Christian past and it
is hard, indeed almost impossible, to find out what aspects of *geis* were
part of the older beliefs and which are a result of further literary develop-
ment. More research has to be done for a deeper insight to be obtained

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[220] This is also pointed out by Fergus Kelly (1988, p. 20), who adds that accor-
ding to a legal commentary it was *geis* for a king with a physical blemish to rule
in Tara (see Neilson Hancock, O'Mahony and others, 1873, pp. 84-5; Binchy,
1978, I, p. 250). This late introduction to *Bretha Étgid*, 'Judgments of inadverten-
ce', also gives another *geis*: that of bringing arms into Tara after sunset (see
Neilson Hancock, O'Mahony and others, 1873, pp. 82-3; Binchy, 1978, I, p.
250). There is an enigmatic text about the tabus of the kings of Ireland (edition
and translation: Dillon, 1951; the language of the prose may be Old Irish; *ibid.*,
p. 3; the term *geis* is only used in the later poetry and in §6, the later end of the
text); according to Greene (1979, p. 11), this text has no historical value.

into this; on the whole, Greene's line of reasoning is not all that convinc-
ing[221].

It seems likely that *gessi* should be considered as an attempt to come to
terms with the dangers that threaten human life. They especially concern
people with a high rank in society. One of these 'high' persons is the king.
It is precisely the kingship that has often been connected with *gessi* in the
early Irish literary tradition, probably because kingship is an institution of
great social importance which must be thoroughly protected. Philip
O'Leary (1988, p. 105) puts it like this:

> "Such *gessi* are by no means random, but rather serve as sanc-
> tions[222] sustaining an all-embracing Irish ideology of kingship
> that mandated for the ruler, as both guarantor and symbol of the
> political, social, and even cosmic harmony of his realm, a commit-
> ment to restraint and moderation even in the exercise of the most
> unquestioningly accepted values of the heroic ethos".

The central part, played by the king in the human and cosmic order,
must be seen in the light of kingship being sacral in early Irish litera-

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[221] Greene's (1979) reconstruction of the development of *geis* seems to be influen-
ced by preconceived ideas about magic/the supernatural. References to a magic
order of the world he seems to consider as 'primitive' or of a lower standard.
Therefore, if this plays a role in the texts he sees this either as a survival of the
pre-Christian past or as a later literary artefact (which he considers to be an
impoverishment of the literature; *ibid.*, p. 19). In between there is early medieval
Irish historical society with its central notions of kingship, honour and status
without "any element of the magical or of the miraculous; they are all concepts
related to the right ordering of society" (*ibid.*). The opposition Greene creates is
one between moral and magic, but I believe that these two are connected in early
Irish texts. For instance, when Greene describes Conaire's downfall in TBDD he
sees a hierarchy in the causes. Greene (*ibid.*, p. 14) maintains that the false
judgment that Conaire pronounces destroys the *raison d'être* of his kingship,
whereas the enumeration and violation of the *gessi* "is a literary device of a much
lower order; it is a descent from the plane of the moral to that of the magical"
(*ibid.*). I do not see a basis in the text for this hierarchy. The cosmic force that
shows itself when a king pronounces a false judgment is, just like the *gessi*, part
of the 'magical order'. Conaire is not dethroned by his subjects because of the
false judgment but he concludes himself that his life will be short (TBDD §21),
which is again an allusion to the workings of the cosmic power.
[222] I doubt whether it is correct to use the word 'sanctions' as function of *gessi*. I
prefer to see *gessi* as safety-rules. The concept of sanctions becomes important
when one disobeys the rules. In the case of disobedience it is not the *gessi* that are
the sanctions but Fate 'determines' certain consequences that could be interpreted
as sanctions. In Fergus's case the blemish is the consequence, although the
matching sanction (loss of kingship) is not his (immediate) destiny.

ture[223]. There is a link between the king and the cosmic order, expressed by *fir flatha*, 'the truth/justice of a rule or ruler'. It is of great importance that the king is a true king, not doing anything wrong, and having no physical blemishes, because the king either causes or is responsible for the fertility of the earth, the fairness of weather and the absence of disasters (Draak, 1959, p. 653).

According to Maartje Draak, there are three precepts for the sacral king. First, he has to keep his 'honour' ('face[224]'). Second, he has to keep his body unimpaired. Third, he has to keep his *gessi* (*ibid.*, pp. 660-3). Moreover, the king should excel in three areas: in physical appearance (*delb*), in wisdom or justice (*gaís*) and in martial or military prowess (*gaisced*). The kingship's foundation is the hidden cosmic force. It is the *fir flatha* that protects against adversity and infertility and that causes prosperity and fertility[225]. If the king fails in one of these areas or if he does not serve the truth he is no longer a true king (McCone, 1990, pp. 121-3).

Geis and *fir flatha* are concepts by which one tries to come to terms with the hidden forces of the cosmic order. This is the third level that can be discerned in the dangers threatening Fergus. Although the text does not use

[223] For a critical study of the concept of sacral kingship in the context of early Irish historical reality, see Wormald (1986). A law text called *Bechbretha*, 'Bee judgments' (BB; edition and translation: Charles-Edwards, Kelly, 1983; dated about the middle of the 7th century; *ibid.*, p. 13), refers to the historical figure of Congall Cáech (Congall the One-eyed) who was blinded in one eye by a bee that stuck him there which caused the end of his kingship of Tara (BB §§30-2). It should be noted that CMR2, where the incident with the bee gives rise to the demand 'an eye for an eye', describes Congall as king of Ulster, which he remains until he falls in the battle of Mag Rath (637). Although his eye is destroyed, he is king. The king of Tara is in this saga Domnall son of Aed, who is foster-father of Congall. (For more about Congall, see Charles-Edwards, Kelly, 1983, pp. 123-31; they refer to other Irish examples from sagas — among which EFmL — and to one non-Irish example of the incompatibility of having a blemish and being king on p. 131; for more non-Irish and two Irish examples, among which again EFmL, see Bremmer, 1980.)

[224] "The crucial legal term '*enech*' "face, honour" (...) has a basic physical sense still well attested in Old Irish (...), but is inextricably linked with conformity to appropriate social and martial norms and with truthfulness in general. (...) The nexus of physical, martial, social and moral or intellectual attributes that constitute a person's '*enech*' is enhanced in the king's case to '*fir flaithemon*' or "ruler's truth", which is distinguished by cosmic resonances reaching beyond the individual into the depths of nature, society and morality as a whole (...)". (McCone, 1990, p. 124). *Flaithemon* is the genitive of *flaithem*, 'a ruler, prince', which is a derivative of *flaith*, 'lordship, sovereignty, rule; a ruler, prince'.

[225] See, for instance, *Audacht Morainn*, 'The Testament of Morann', from about 700, which is a *speculum regale*, 'mirror of a king', in which this correlation is described extensively (Kelly, 1976, pp. xiii-xiv, 6-11).

the term *geis*[226] it would appear to be justified to recognize the tabu pronounced by the *lúchorpáin*[227] as this institution: it is a protection against hidden forces (personified in the monster); its transgression activates Fate and this leads in the end to tragedy. The tragedy consists of a series of events initiated by the physical blemish on the king's face, which is a sign of the damaged *fír flatha*. Therefore, transgression of the supernatural rule leads to the breakdown of the supernatural basis of kingship.

As mentioned earlier, the supernatural rule about the loch is expressed by beings associated with water. They do not explain why the king is prohibited from going into the water that belongs to his own territory (according to the prose version) or that is related to his *fine* (according to the poem). There might be a third connection between Fergus and the water, expressed in the name of the loch and the ancestry of the king. Rudraige is, in fact, the name of the ancestor of the Ulaid (Thurneysen, 1921/79, p. 92). Moreover, he is also mentioned as the grandfather of Fergus: "*Fergus m. Leiti m. Rudraigi*" (O'Brien, 1962, p. 276).

According to Ruairí Ó hUiginn (1993, p. 34), the genealogical traditions that give such an important place to Rudraige as ancestor are 'spurious and late':

"for the formation is clearly an old tribal name in -*raige* which survives in the place-names Loch and Trácht Rudraige. In view of the alternation between Ruad and Rud in names such as Rudgus/Rúadgus and Rudgal/Rúadgal, it may be postulated that the first element is a byform of the adjective *ruad* 'red' which appears as a common noun and as a personal name. Like many other figures found in the literature, the personal name *Rudraige* has been extracted from toponymic sources, in this case Trácht Rudraige and Loch Rudraige, and a legend woven around them" (*ibid.*).

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[226] The later version does not mention a *geis* in this context either, but it gives two different causes of the blemish: first, an accidental encounter with the Sinech (O'Grady, 1892, II, p. 283); second, the dwarf imposed the shape upon the king (*ibid.*, p. 285). No interdiction is mentioned regarding the water.

[227] Before expressing the interdiction upon the loch, the dwarf extorts Fergus's protection from him. The text describes this in a double way. First, there is the formulaic set consisting of *anmain i n-anmain* with the consequent *drinnroisc* followed by the interdiction about the loch (EFmL §4). Second, there is a ritual in which the dwarf sucks Fergus's nipples and catches hold of his cheek to ask protection from him and appeal to his honour. The dwarf calls this way of making a deal *fír fer* (EFmL §5). O'Leary (1988, p. 98) gives two other early Irish examples of rituals connected with seeking protection and suggests that the concept of *geis* is 'at work' in this context of "aggressive challenge, threatened honour and instinctive acquiescence" (*ibid.*). Incidentally, in his *Confessio* St Patrick objects to this practice on the grounds that it is 'pagan' (Howlett, 1994, pp. 62-3; for more about this ritual, see Binchy, 1952, p. 42; Byrne, 1932; O'Brien, 1938, pp. 372-3).

Therefore, here is a positive statement of the question earlier formulated
by Binchy:

> "Rudraige may have originally been a tribal name in -*r(a)ige* (...).
> Is the somewhat curious personal name Rudraige, an ancestral king
> of the Ulaid (*Clann Rudraige*), an invention of the genealogists
> based on the name of this loch?" (Binchy, 1952, p. 42).

It should be noted, however, that the name Rudraige does not occur in the
lists of early Irish population groups that Mac Neill (1911-12, pp. 67-9)
and Mícheál Ó Briain (1925) give. According to Thurneysen (1921/79, p.
92), the ancestral name Rudraige is derived from the place name Dún
Rudraige (identified as Dundrum).

If Ó hUiginn is right then the name of the people is the most original.
They may have given their name to places: Dún Rudraige, Fertas
Rudraige, Loch Rudraige, and Trácht Rudraige. The name Rudraige was,
furthermore, at some stage used for a mythological person: Rudraige as a
person can be found, for instance, in the Middle Irish *Lebor Gabála
Érenn*, 'The Book of the Taking of Ireland' (LGE; edition and translation:
Macalister, 1932/38, 1933/39, 1937/40 and 1939/41), and related texts.
Rudraige is there described as one of the early inhabitants of Ireland. He is
connected with the coming into existence ('bursting forth') of Loch
Rudraige (Macalister, 1933/39, pp. 268-9). One could compare this with
an entry in *Annala rioghachta Eireann*, 'The Annals of the kingdom of
Ireland', by the Four Masters (AFM; edition and translation: O'Donovan,
1856):

"Aois domhoin,	"The Age of the World,
dá míle cuig céd cethracha a cuig.	2545.
Rudhruidhe mac Parthaloin	Rudhruidhe, son of Parthalon,
do bathadh i LochRudhruidhe,	was drowned in Loch Rudhruidhe,
iar ttomaidm in locha tairis,	the lake having flowed over him;
conadh uadha raiter Loch	and from him the lake is called"
Rudhruighe"	
(O'Donovan, 1856, I, p. 6)	(*ibid.*, p. 7).

It is uncertain how far back the connection between Fergus and Rudraige
goes, and how genuine Rudraige's mythological character is, but I would
suggest that part of the mythological background of EFmL may be the link
between Fergus and his ancestor Rudraige[228]. The fate of these two men
is the same, according to the *Annals*: both Rudraige (AFM) and Fergus
(AT) drown in Loch Rudraige[229]. There is no evidence that the tradition

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[228] It should also be noted that Fergus's parent could be called a supernatural
character: Let or Leite from the *síd* (see Ó hUiginn, 1993, pp. 35-6).
[229] Fertas and Loch Rudraige are mentioned as dangerous places in the *Annals*:
1200 foreigners drowned in Loch Rudraige in 922 according to the AFM

of the fatal death of Rudraige is as old as the story about Fergus, but if it is it could throw some light upon the question of why this particular loch is forbidden to Fergus. The name of the loch might contain a warning from the past: the water that was fatal to his ancestor will probably also be dangerous to Fergus.

The motif of Fergus not being allowed to go into the loch related to his *fine* and named after his ancestor/grandfather might be an example of the idea that representatives of the same kind should be kept separated. As is well known, human communities create cultural systems in which the elements of the material and immaterial world are classified. With these classifications, rules of behaviour are often given as well (see, for instance, the anthropological studies of Mary Douglas, 1966/91, and Claude Lévi-Strauss, 1972; 1975). There are many examples of this way of thinking. I will limit myself here to one instance: the concept of totemism (which has been applied to Irish texts[230]). It should be noted that I am only giving this example as an illustration of this way of thinking; I do not want to give the impression that there was a totemic clan system in Ireland. It is merely a certain way in which human societies perceive a certain order around them and consequently take this up in their system of rules.

Totem-clans is the name given to a form of human organisation found in many parts of the world. A clan is "a unilineal, usually exogamous kingroup, the members of which derive their identity from a common symbol, often by descent from a common, traditional ancestor or group of ancestors" (Van Baal, Van Beek, 1971/85, p. 46). In the case of totem-clans this common symbol is the totem. A totem can be a kind of plant or animal; it can be the sun, the moon, a mountain, a river or a material object like an axe or a bow, or even a certain act. There is a specific, supernatural relationship between the clan members and the totem. The name of the clan can be derived from the totem. The clan and the totem may have a common ancestor who may appear as a human being or as the species of the totem or as both. Often there are behavioural prescriptions for the clan: they may not kill, eat, or injure the totem. The reverse may also be the case (*ibid.*). This is thus a clear case of a classification system which connects the origin of a human population group with a certain species that inhabits the group's world and which lays down rules about the behaviour of the members of this group.

Instances of this line of thought (that beings belonging to the same classification group should be kept apart in a certain way) can be found in the early Irish BMMM and TBDD. In BMMM (Best, O'Brien, 1956, II, p.

(O'Donovan, 1856, II, pp. 610-1) and in 942 a fleet of foreigners foundered and drowned at Fertas Rudraige according to the *Annals of Ulster* (AU 924.2; Mac Airt, Mac Niocaill, 1983, pp. 376-7).

[230] This was done by Géza Róheim (1983/84; first published in 1925), who gave an astonishing psycho-analytical view on Irish 'totemic' tabus. For a critical comment upon the use of the word 'totemism' in this context, see O'Leary (1988, pp. 90-2).

445; Tymoczko, 1981, pp. 49-50) Cú Chulainn, whose name means 'Hound of Culann' because he killed Culann's hound and then took over its guarding function (see TBC Rec. I; O'Rahilly, 1976a, pp. 17-9, 140-2) is said to be under the *geis* to eat the meat of the animal after which he was named: the Dog should not eat dog. Because of conflicting *gessi* he is forced to break this one. The parts of his body that touch the meat (a hand and a thigh) lose their power[231].

In TBDD Conaire is begotten by a supernatural being: a bird transforming into a man (TBDD §7); bird-people, moreover, bestow the kingship upon Conaire (§13) and his rule is called a 'bird-rule' (§16: *énflaith*). Thus, Conaire is connected with birds; at the same time he is also under the restriction not to hunt birds (§§7, 13; the text does not use the term *geis*). These two examples might perhaps indicate that this way of thinking could be at the root of the interdiction in EFmL as well: the descendant of Rudraige should not enter the loch of Rudraige.

If the Rudraige tradition is later than the story about Fergus, another explanation has to be sought. Perhaps the meaning of the interdiction about the loch is a reference to the idea that there are limits to human power: although Fergus is a king and although the loch is part of his kingdom or connected with his *fine* (as can be concluded from the prose and poetry version of the story respectively), there are places which are forbidden even to him and which are beyond him.

An important motif in this narrative is, therefore, the transgression by the king. O'Leary's definition of *geis* (see above) applied to Fergus's adventure gives the following result: the danger is defined by its localisation: the loch; it is restricted by the interdiction: do not go into the loch; and it is controlled if Fergus actually avoids the loch. Fergus appears to transgress all three precepts for a sacral king, mentioned by Draak (see above): he breaks his *geis* by going into the loch (3); he is deformed as a result (2); and is consequently taunted by Dorn (1).

From this it follows that Fergus should no longer be king. Fergus loses 'his face'; he runs away from the fight initially and goes on living a lie; he closes his eyes to the truth which is essential to kingship or, at least, he is shielded from it by the wise ones. Remarkable here is that nothing happens during Fergus's false reign of seven (or three) years[232]: there is no refer-

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[231] It should be noted that Fergus mac Leite can be found in this text as well: he is mentioned in a poetic enumeration of Ulster heroes who did not come to Cú Chulainn's rescue (Best, O'Brien, 1956, II, p. 456; Tymoczko, 1981, p. 78).

[232] There is another king of Ulster, Conchobar, who receives a blemish and, despite this fact, reigns on for seven years. He then dies by an outburst of rage caused by wanting to revenge Jesus Christ's death (*Aided Chonchobuir*, 'The Death of Conchobar'; Meyer, 1906/37, pp. 2-21). According to Kim McCone (letter, 27-2-1992), "it is not inconceivable that *Aided Chonchobuir* was a literary model for the relevant part of *Echtra Fergusa*". However, there is no proof for this theory. I would not care to venture an opinion on the relationship between the two texts. Although there are remarkable similarities there is no indication of

ence to the infertility of the land or any other sign of the consequences of the damage done to *fír flatha*.

The question that now arises is how evil is to be categorised in this text. The monster belongs to nature untamed — the power of Chaos that surrounds and sometimes threatens the human community. This is a form of non-moral evil: evil which is brought about but for which nobody can be blamed[233]. Nature can damage humankind by floods, earthquakes, wind, lightning, etc. Monsters may represent this dangerous side of nature and I hope to have shown in 1.3.2 that the *muirdris* could personify the dangerous movement of water[234].

In EFmL the danger/non-moral evil is localised: Fergus even has the exact information about which spot is dangerous. The way to deal with this

which influenced which. In any case, the seven years in *Aided Chonchobuir* should be seen in a Christian perspective. Carney (1955/79, p. 297) puts it like this: "The seven years which Conchobar was made to live after his first 'death' seems to me to be of the greatest significance. In the Annals covering the pre-Christian period the death of Conchobar is placed at approximately 20 A.D. The author of this tale (who may have lived as early as the eighth century) must have been firmly convinced of the accuracy of this date, since when he made Conchobar's death coincident with the Passion he felt obliged to prolong his life by seven years".

[233] As was mentioned in the introduction, this categorisation of evil is 'modern'. In some world views natural disasters are proof of moral evil done by humans. The modern categories are applied because they help in elucidating the different levels of evil in the texts.

[234] Watkins (1995, p. 446) refers to another level symbolised by the monster. He characterises the dragon conflict in Indo-European mythology as a conflict with Chaos: "The dragon-killing myth represents a symbolic victory of order over the forces of chaos, as we have seen; of growth over stagnation in the cycle of the year, of rebirth over death, which must be perpetually and cyclically retold to maintain its effectiveness" (*ibid.*). This description seems to deal with processes in nature. However, he goes on to say that "the chaos symbolized by the Indo-European dragon was fundamentally social in character. (...) the evil or chaos that must be overcome by the narration of the myth, the telling of the story, is all that is 'anti-social', anti-traditional, anti-hierarchical, and that is in violation of the fundamental institutionalized gift-exchange relations and consecrated customs which are alliance and blood kinship, symbolized by hospitality. These are characteristic notions for a society where the highest ethical ideal is that Cosmic Truth which is 'fitted, ordered', and therefore 'right, true' (...)" (*ibid.*). I agree with Watkins in connecting the fight with the *muirdris* with kingship and *fír* (social aspects). Furthermore, the *muirdris* could be related with kinship because the beast lives in a loch called *finech*, related to the *fine* (and perhaps also named after an ancestor of Fergus). But this is not what Watkins means; he tranlates *finech* in a different way (see above, note 77). It would have been illuminating and welcome had Watkins been more explicit in connecting the specific tale of EFmL with his general theory about the Indo-European dragon-killing myth, especially because he points out interesting parallels.

danger is given by the dwarfs: stay away; avoid it. Fergus is protected from this danger by his *geis*; by breaking the *geis* it becomes explicit what the danger consists of: first, in the blemish on the kingship and second, in the death of the king. The dwarfs play an ambivalent role: after threatening Fergus's life (by the attempted kidnapping) they protect it (by the imposition of the *geis*). It should be noted that water, the element with which they are associated, also has an ambivalent character in bringing both life and death.

If one considers this course of events in the light of Draak's theory about the native Irish ethical code, then the conclusion could be drawn that Fergus's act was morally wrong. The results of his doings are bad, therefore his acts were wrong. Perhaps one could even conclude that Fate guarded the order by using the monster as an instrument to restore the balance. If this is correct, the monster as non-moral evil is closely connected with moral evil (the transgression of the *geis*; the non-observance of the rules pertaining to kingship, see also 1.3.4) because the monster receives a place and a function in the invisible order, guarded by the impersonal power of Fate. But it should be noted that Gwynn's observation that the morality is not emphasised holds true in the case of EFmL as well. The whole course of events is described as cause and effect: no moral judgments are pronounced *expressis verbis*. As argued above, one could detect an implicit moral, expressed by people who have a lower place in the social hierarchy: the charioteer and the slave. I will return to the latter below.

1.3.4 The way in which the monster is overcome

Protection and human nature are sometimes tensely related. That which is dangerous often attracts, especially a certain kind of human: the hero.

According to Joseph Nagy's structuralist view, the monster represents the problematic combination of two functions — the warrior and the king — in Fergus: "His extraordinary heroic nature ultimately alienates him from his kingdom and his kingship, so that the social structure inappropriately based upon him collapses" (Nagy, 1983b, p. 35). Nagy found this structure in the story (*ibid.*, pp. 37-40):

1. Revenge and protection/expansion of tribal territory: proof of kingliness
2. a) Near-death and winning of alien object or quality
     > Fergus <u>sleeps</u> and his life is threatened by the dwarfs. He survives and attains both the ability to travel under water and the <u>interdiction</u> upon one loch.
   b) Violation of interdiction: kingship threatened
     > Fergus <u>violates</u> the interdiction and is disfigured. He <u>sleeps</u> and a new <u>interdiction</u> is proclaimed: the disfigurement must be concealed. The female slave <u>violates</u> the interdiction.
3. Fight with symbolic beast; death of hero and collapse of kingship.

To this structure I would like to add the returning water association:

    2a. Fergus sleeps near the <u>sea</u> before receiving the gift
    2b. Fergus dives into a <u>loch</u> before becoming disfigured
    2b. Dorn reveals the truth before washing Fergus's head with <u>water</u>.

Nagy's theory seems to amount to this: if Fergus were a hero and not a king, he would have had a good chance of surviving the fight.

    I would like to comment on this in the following way: first, the martial aspect is one of the essential parts of kingship. Is it possible to separate these things the way Nagy does? Second, the woman's role has been ignored too much in his analysis. She speaks the truth (which is explicitly mentioned in the poetry version) and shows society, in which truth is the basis of kingship, that this value has been violated. Looking at the structure in the story one may observe that her death is followed by two other deaths (the monster's and Fergus's). Her exile is preceded by another (Eochu). She has a conflict with the king in which she, being a slave, is the party with the less power. This is preceded by the conflict between the king and the dwarf, who is also the weaker because of his size. Twice she serves as a scapegoat (for her son and for Fergus: instead of immediately taking revenge on the beast that caused the blemish he punishes the messenger) which is 'appropriate' because of her position (she is an outsider: in her society because of a foreign partner and in Fergus's society as a foreign slave). It seems to me that these elements should not be overlooked, and a structural analysis especially should identify them.

    Fergus as guarantor and symbol of the political, social and cosmic order should have restrained himself; in the service of his kingship (but of course also in his own personal interest) he should have stayed away from the loch. In other words, he should have obeyed his *geis* instead of following his curiosity or his quest for martial honour. In breaking the *geis* he should have faced its consequences and fulfilled his martial function immediately, *i.e.* no fear or flight, but a fight. If he had died fighting, this would have been the consequence of breaking his *geis*; if he had been victorious, he would have been a true king[235], capable of defending his territory[236]. His death is a consequence of a series of events: his blemish is caused by his fear; to get rid of this blemish he has to conquer his fear; in the fight he conquers his fear, but loses his life (Binchy, 1968/85, p. 49).

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[235] Cowardice is a disqualification for kingship; see *Críth Gablach* §40: "*A guin inna dí culaid dna oc teched a rroi dober diri naithaig do, act mad treo docoí; ar isamlaid sóon direnatar dí cúlaid righ asa inchaib*" (Kelly, 1988, p. 352), 'An injury to the back of his head while he flees from the battlefield gives the honour-price of a commoner to him, unless he has gone through them (the enemy), for in that case a wound in the back of the king's head entails the same fine as a wound in his face' (*ibid.*, p. 353).

[236] According to Van Hamel (1934a, pp. 18-9), the preservation and protection of the land forms the religious undercurrent in Celtic literature (either by 'knowledge' of the land or by hunting or fighting).

It is not inconceivable that the woman is an instrument of Fate as well: because of her words the Truth comes to light and the king must open his eyes to these facts that made his kingship false.

To warriors, to whom the king belongs too, the highest honour code is *fír fer* (O'Leary, 1987a, p. 27). The dwarf seems to mask his less powerful position in the conflict with the king by calling their negotiations a fair fight (*fír fer*[237]). Here the word for truth, *fír*, is used, which also occurs in another place in this context: the poem speaks about Dorn who dies because of the (literally: her) truth ("*do-cer inna fírinni*"). As the party with the less power in the conflict with the king she taunts him with the truth in the prose. She breaks society's rule in that she speaks where everybody has to be silent, but not speaking would mean lying. As an outsider it may have been easier for her to transgress the rule. In a way one could see her as a heroine, albeit a heroine outside the community, who is true to society's real ethics. Just like Fergus, who dies seeking his honour (revenge upon the beast), Dorn dies seeking her honour (speaking the truth and revealing the unstability of the kingship). Probably she felt injured in her honour by serving a false king who, on top of that, mal-treated her. Far from her relatives she has no protection; she either hits back by taunting (in the prose) or takes revenge with the truth (in the poem). In this 'fight' she perishes by the 'hero's' sword, just as he per-ishes by the wounds inflicted on him by the beast. Incidentally, Fergus oversteps his bounds in killing her. Although he had until then been protected by his admirers, now everybody knows he did the wrong thing: the land has to be given to Dorn's relatives again.

To sum up, the danger embodied in the monster as part of nature untamed threatening the human community, would have remained unknown if the king had been obedient to his *geis*. The danger is eliminated by the king who, like a hero, decapitates the monster with his sword. In order for this to happen it was necessary that the woman should be disobedient to society's demands. If she had suffered silently the ill-treatment by the king the danger would still exist.

Summary and conclusions

In *Echtra Fergusa maic Leiti* there is one monster: a *muirdris*, which is a water monster living in a loch. A special characteristic is that it inflates and contracts itself which could perhaps be connected with the (dangerous) movement of water. No source seems to be used to describe it; its prov-enance would appear to be Irish.

The evil that the monster represents is the non-moral evil of nature. One may avoid it, especially if one is aware of its location. The main character of the narrative, the king, is subject to a *geis* which says how

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[237] Perhaps this is meant ambiguously: the literal meaning 'truth/justice of men' would claim their equality as both the king and the dwarf are men. This also masks the imbalance of power.

and where to avoid a great danger. The *geis* protects the cosmic order and the sacral kingship, and in this way also the king himself. However, he breaks the *geis* and is deformed as a result of the fear aroused by the monster. Now his kingship becomes unstable, but the aristocratic members of the human community close their eyes to this fact. It is only when an outsider, a foreign female slave struck by resentment, points out this bad state of affairs that the king has to face the facts.

By force and violence the danger is overcome; the king kills the one who refers to the monster and afterwards the monster itself. Consequently, he dies too. In short, the monster, representing the danger of nature, is located (first indirectly by the dwarfs and then directly by the king) and terminated by killing (by the king at the instigation of the female slave). It has its head cut off by the king's sword. It is likely that the charm, which the king has at his disposal, also plays a part in the fight.

Evil simply exists in the native Irish context; there seems to be no need to explain its origin. One tries to avoid evil, which is possible by being obedient to the rules (*gessi*) that are based on an invisible order. This order seems to be maintained by Fate, which 'uses instruments' (such as the elements, and in this tale perhaps the monster and the female slave) to restore the balance when it has been disturbed. If one fails to avoid evil one must try to end it and restore the balance, even if this means losing one's own life.

2. *Vita Sancti Columbae*,
'The Life of Saint Columba', by Adomnán

Introduction

The text taken as representative of the hagiographical group is *Vita Sancti Columbae*[238] (VC). The genre of hagiography deals with the biographies of holy persons. The *Life of St Columba* is dated to *circa* 700 (see below, 2.1) and was written in Latin[239].

Columba was born between 519 and 522 and died on 9 June 597 (Anderson, 1961/91, p. xxviii). He was an Irish monk, who left Ireland together with twelve companions in 563 (Kenney, 1929/79, p. 224). His Irish name had originally been *Crimthann*, 'fox'; his religious Latin name was *Columba*, 'dove'; an Irish derivative of this is *colum(b)*, which later became *Colum(m) Cille*[240], 'Dove of the Church' (Anderson, 1961/91, p. xxix). He founded a monastery on the island of Hii — or Iona —, which became an influential centre of the Irish church (Kenney, 1929/79, p. 224). Columba is regarded as one of the major Irish saints.

The context and classification of the text will be treated (2.1); the *Life* will be summarised (2.2) and, finally, the monsters occurring in VC will be dealt with (2.3).

2.1 Context and classification of the text

Vita Sancti Columbae consists of stories about Columba's miracles, which happen both during and after his life. These anecdotes were collected, arranged and written by Adomnán, a relative of Columba and his ninth

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[238] The text is found in the following manuscripts: Msc. Generalia I, Stadtbibliothek Schaffhausen, fol. 1-136, 713; ms. I, Grand Séminaire Metz, fol. 1-79, 9th century; Add 35110, BL, fol. 96ᵛ-143ʳ, *c.* 1195; Cottonian Tiberius D III, BL, fol. 192ʳ-217ʳ, end-12th to very early 13th centuries; and Royal 8 D IX, BL, fol.1ʳ-70ʳ, 15th to early 16th centuries. The text was edited and translated by Marjorie Ogilvie Anderson (1961/91; a revision of the book by *id.* and Alan Orr Anderson of 1961). More recently, the text was translated by Richard Sharpe (1995).

[239] For details about the Hiberno-Latin, see Picard (1982b).

[240] Pádraig Ó Riain (letter, 9-1-1995) has informed me of his opinion that Columb's name must be Irish in origin. He gives two reasons: first, the name Columb has generated a very large number of hypocorisms (see, for instance, Ó Riain, 1983, pp. 24-7); second, the Latin Columba is a feminine form which makes it unlikely that the Irish masculine Columb derived from it.

successor as abbot of Iona. Adomnán lived from *c.* 628[241] till 704 (Anderson, 1961/91, pp. xxxix, xli) and became abbot in 679 (Kenney, 1929/79, p. 284). He wrote VC on Iona (Anderson, 1961/91, p. xlii). Jean-Michel Picard (1982a, pp. 167-9) shows, on the basis of internal evidence, that VC was completed between 697 and 704[242]. Completion must have been after two episodes described in VC which are datable: first, Adomnán mentions a drought of which the earliest possible date is 696; second, he refers to an important synod, which Picard identifies as the Synod of Birr in 697.

Ecclesiastical politics gave rise to the writing of this work, according to Picard (1982a, pp. 170-2). In the second half of the seventh century, saints' *Lives* were written with a view not only to spiritual matters (a religious message in the form of a narrative about a saint) but also to ecclestiastical politics (see also McCone, 1984). The prestige of the patron saint of a monastery was closely connected with the status of that monastic community. Events in a written *Life* of the monastery's founder served as justification for the territorial claims of that monastery.

The monks of Iona asked Adomnán to write a *Life* and, according to Picard, for a particular reason, *i.e.* the rivalries between monastic communities. Iona's power was waning. In Ireland it was losing ground to the monastery of Armagh, which received patronage from the powerful Uí Neill — the royal descendents of the legendary Niall Noígiallach (Niall of the Nine Hostages) who ruled over the northern half of Ireland — even though Columba's *paruchia* had older and closer links with them. Moreover, Iona came under attack as a result of the Roman mission in Anglo-Saxon England: there were disputes about the Easter date and the shape of the tonsure. Part of this controversy were Northumbrian attacks on Columba and the questioning of his holiness (Picard, 1982a, pp. 171-4). The community of Iona had to respond and one of their answers was the production of VC.

Máire Herbert (1988, p. 146) has a different opinion. She sees no evidence in VC that it is concerned with claims to status and property rights, writing: "It is the community of Colum Cille who have the political backing and the able leadership which place them in the forefront of the Irish ecclesiastical scene at the time, and there is no evidence to suggest that this position was compromised by Iona attitudes on the Easter question" (*ibid.*). Herbert points out that the central point was that Columba had led a holy life, and "not the fact that he had observed particular ordinances regarding the celebration of Easter or the wearing of the monastic tonsure" (*ibid.*, p. 144). She also refers to Adomnán's probable motivation to write the work as a rectification of the views about the saint found in Northumbria. The central point of VC in Herbert's view is also given by

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[241] According to Picard (1982a, p. 171), Adomnán was born in 624.
[242] Kenney (1929/79, p. 432) dates the completion of the text to 688 — 689 or soon thereafter. According to Anderson (1961/91, p. xlii), the text was not completed before 688, possibly after 697.

Picard (1982a, p. 177), who regards the original aim of hagiography as Adomnán's main objective: the description of the life of a saint as an example to follow for the believers.

The structure of VC can be connected with the structure found in three textual genres: first, the genre of biography from Greek and Latin classical literature; second, the genre of Christian hagiography, and third, early Irish narratives. Adomnán used these kinds of text as a model, adding his personal touch. I will exemplify this now, following Picard (1985).

VC is not a 'real' biography but a thematic categorisation of anecdotes about miracles. This approach is not new but can be traced to the genre of biography in Greek and Latin in which two main tendencies existed, namely chronology (a life is told in a chronological order) and eidology (a character is described by systematic classification of deeds, sayings, and habits; Picard, 1985, p. 70). Hellenistic biography shows a traditional pattern of: 1. deeds ($\pi\rho\acute{\alpha}\xi\epsilon\iota\varsigma$); 2. virtues ($\dot{\alpha}\rho\epsilon\tau\alpha\acute{\iota}$); 3. way of life ($\dot{\epsilon}\pi\iota\tau\eta\delta\epsilon\upsilon\mu\acute{\alpha}\tau\alpha$ or $\pi o\lambda\iota\tau\epsilon\acute{\iota}\alpha$; *ibid.*, p. 71). The tripartite structure can also be found in hagiography: Sulpicius Severus (†647) adapted this pattern for his *Life of Martin* (of Tours): 1. Early deeds (*acta*); 2. manifestations of supernatural power (*virtutes*); 3. holy way of life (*conversatio*; *ibid.*).

The structure of Columba's *Life* is based on this latter model of Sulpicius Severus. Adomnán gives this a personal twist by keeping the tripartite structure but making new categories — three kinds of miracle — which show an increase in supernatural power (*ibid.*, p. 76). In the first book (which is the first part) Adomnán presents Columba as a contemplative saint and an equal of saints Antony of Egypt (*c.* 251 — 356), Martin of Tours (*c.* 316 — 397) and Benedict of Nursia (*c.* 480 — *c.* 550). The second book is about divine exercise of power and Columba is modelled after Jesus Christ and the apostles. It is important to note that it is in this book that most of the monsters are to be found. The third book has two aims: first, Columba's superior supernatural power is shown to emanate from a good source of which the apparitions of angels and lights are 'proofs'. This is an opposition with the prophetic and miracle-working powers of the druids which, according to Adomnán, emanate from an evil source (Picard, 1985, p. 77). Second, the angels and lights that accompany Columba are a sign that the saint — although still alive — is already part of the Heavenly World (*ibid.*, pp. 75-7).

The absence of a chronological order naturally has consequences for the image of the saint. There is no description of any development in holiness: from the beginning, Columba is a fully holy man. Picard (*ibid.*, pp. 78-9) maintains that this is not directly in line with Jewish and Christian ideas on 'growth towards God' (which was important in other Western hagiographies) but more with Aristotelian ideas in which the personal disposition given at birth determines one's life (which was a main feature of classical biography and taken over in some hagiographies). Besides classical influence, Picard (*ibid.*, p. 79) also refers to native Irish parallels: the hero 'in Celtic mythology' can be characterised in the same way.

'Celtic mythology' is a very broad reference[243]; I assume he has, for instance, the image of Cú Chulainn in mind, who as a young boy seems to be just as extraordinarily strong and courageous as later in his life. Nevertheless, Adomnán does not paint a dull picture of Columba. Even though his holiness is constant, his character is not. His temperament fluctuates from "extreme kindness" to "irrational violence", according to Picard (*ibid.*, p. 79[244]).

VC also shows a division within this broad tripartite structure: now and then chapters have been joined together as smaller textual units based on a theme, as for instance 'terrible vengeance upon enemies' (see below, 2.2). Sometimes Adomnán expicitly announces such a theme. This technique of *divisio* might be traced back to the methods of *grammatici*, according to Picard (*ibid.*, pp. 77-8).

Furthermore, Picard (*ibid.*, pp. 80-1) points out another pattern that is part of VC's structure: the life of a saint told against the background of journeys. He (*ibid.*, p. 80) refers to one of Adomnán's sources, *Vita Hilarionis* written in 391 by Jerome (*c.* 341 — 420), who set the trend. Picard (*ibid.*) also mentions the vernacular narrative tradition as a determining factor in the choice of this pattern, but again he is not explicit about this[245]. Instead, he (*ibid.*, n. 63) refers to an article by McCone (1984, p. 31 and n. 17). McCone indeed gives examples of the importance of topography in early Irish texts, but it should be noted that he expresses the opinion that geography does not seem to be of major importance in VC: "The contrast between the geographical orientation of Tírechán and the thaumaturgic orientation of Cogitosus and Adomnán could hardly be more marked. In Adomnán categories of miracle provide the frame and geographical or personal details, although quite numerous and not devoid of significance, occur more or less at random (...)" (McCone, 1984, p. 31). The journey structure does not seem to be as important as the tripartition combined with the smaller divisions.

The *Life* in its tripartite structure is preceded by two prefaces. Picard shows that this is in keeping with an older hagiographical tradition as well. Evagrius of Antioch (†392/393) added to his Latin translation of Athanasius's (*c.* 296 — 373) *Life of Antony* a second preface as a kind of translator's footnote; Sulpicius Severus in his *Life of Martin* made it a functional part of his literary style: the first preface deals with possible

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[243] In another publication (Picard, 1989), the author is more specific about the parallels between an episode in VC and early Irish narratives.

[244] According to Anderson (1961/91, pp. xxxvii-xxxviii), the views of Comte de Montalembert (19th century) on Columba as described by Manus O'Donnell in his Irish *Life of Columba* (1532) has coloured modern readings of VC. Anderson interprets the instances of Columba's anger in VC as representing divine retribution.

[245] One might think, for instance, of Cú Chulainn's journeys to Emer (his future wife), to Scáthach (his teacher in martial arts) and back to Emer again in TE; or the journey that the great bull of Cúailnge makes before he dies in TBC, or the journeys described in the genres of *immrama* and *echtrai*.

criticisms, the second gives a survey of the book's structure. This is exactly the example which Adomnán follows (Picard, 1985, p. 75[246]).

After this brief sketch of the structure and background of VC, the contents of this hagiography will now be summarised.

2.2 *Vita Sancti Columbae*. Summary

As mentioned above, the *Life of St Columba* consists of three books preceded by two prefaces and the table of contents of the first book.

In the first preface Adomnán relates that it is at the instigation of the brothers on Iona that he is writing this *Life* of their patron Columba. He requests his readers to pay more attention to the contents than to the form or the language, for which he apologises. He indicates (not only here) that it is only a selection of his material that he presents, for the sake of brevity and readability.

In the second preface Adomnán dwells upon the name of the saint: *iona* in Hebrew; *peristera* in Greek and *columba* in Latin. Jonah, pronounced as 'iona', is the name of a Hebrew prophet. The word means 'dove', which is the symbol of the Holy Spirit. Columba is called by this biblical name from his birth[247]. Many years before this event Columba's birth, name, and fame were prophesied by a British saint[248]. Adomnán then describes the subject of his work: the life and character (*vita et mores*) of Columba, his holy way of life (*conversatio*), and some examples of his miracles. He points out how he has divided the miracles thematically into three books and he furthermore accounts for his sources in this preface[249], which are both written and oral. Finally, Columba's parentage, career and character are briefly introduced. Fedelmith son of Fergus and Ethne daughter of Mac Naue were his noble parents. When he was forty-two Columba left Ireland as a pilgrim for Christ (*pro Christo perigrinari*). His whole life long Columba was an extraordinarily spiritual man. He worked hard and was full of love, joy, and holy happiness.

Book I, under the heading "Of prophetic revelations", begins after the table of contents of the first book. It consists of fifty short chapters in

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[246] According to Picard (1982a, pp. 176-7), Adomnán addressed three different audiences — in Ireland, in Anglo-Saxon Northumberland and on the continent — in these two carefully composed prefaces, which are adapted to the tastes of the readers of different cultural groups. This is disputed by Michael Enright (1985, pp. 101-2): in his view Adomnán aimed his message at kings and dynasties. However, he also sees the text as a response to the propaganda of Iona's rival Armagh (*ibid.*, p. 96), which is more or less Adomnán's 'first' audience in Picard's view.

[247] Apparently, Adomnán does not refer to his earlier Irish name (see above, the introduction to this chapter).

[248] This was St Maucte; or: Mauchte, Mochta(e), a pupil of St Patrick (Anderson, 1961/91, p. 5, n. 4).

[249] "(...) the tradition passed on by our predecessors, and by trustworthy men who knew the facts" (Anderson, 1961/91, p. 7).

which a prophecy[250] by Columba is mentioned, followed by the events
which accord with this prediction.

The first chapter of the first book (I.1) contains a summary of
Columba's miracles. Although Adomnán classifies the miracles into three
groups, overlaps sometimes occur. His solution to this problem seems to
be given in this first chapter, where he starts with a summary of miracles
of power[251], which are actually the theme of the second book. In the
heading of the second book he adds that miracles of power are often
accompanied by prophetic prescience, which is the theme of the first
book[252]. In I.1 he also mentions the apparitions of angels and light,
which are the theme of the third book. Therefore, in this chapter Adomnán
seems to link the three different kinds of miracle to each other.

There are healing and beneficial miracles mentioned in this first
chapter. Columba is also shown in encounters, performing miracles in
which he expels dangers. As encounters with evil are central to this
dissertation some extra attention will be paid to this latter motif. Columba
dispels hosts of hostile demons, says Adomnán's summary, with God's
help. With the aid of Christ, he checks "the raging fury of wild beasts
(*bestiae furiosae*), by killing some and strongly repelling others[253]"
(Anderson, 1961/91, pp. 12-3). Waves are calmed by him and he sails fast
against the wind to confound Pictish druids (*magi*[254]). He plays a role in
the conversion of Britain to the Christian religion in appearing in a miracu-
lous way to King Oswald (†642) before an important battle[255], addressing
this man in the same way as God did to Joshua before he crossed the Jordan[256].

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[250] A prophecy can have different kinds of content: first, the prediction which has
the character of either a judgment or a salvation, and second, the penitential
sermon which can be either a reprimand or an admonition to conversion (Vriezen,
Van der Woude, 1948/80, p. 220). Columba's prophecies are mainly of the first
kind: he foretells the future to/about the person(s) involved.

[251] I.1 is headed by *De uirtutum miraculis breuis narratio*, 'A summary of
miracles of power' (Anderson, 1961/91, pp. 12-3), again the theme of the second
book.

[252] In the following chapters of the second book he repeatedly stresses this fact.

[253] Compare II.26 in which he kills a monstrous wild boar and II.27 in which he
repels a water monster (for more about these beasts, see below).

[254] This is to be found in II.34 (see below). The text gives the word *magi*, 'Magi-
ans, learned men and magicians'. The Irish equivalent of Latin *magus* is *druí*,
'druid; magician, wizard or diviner (in general, often used as the equivalent of the
druid in non-Celtic peoples)'. Anderson translates *magus* by 'magician', but
perhaps 'druid' is more suitable for the context.

[255] This resembles the miraculous appearance of a cross to Emperor Constantine
(*c*. 274 — 337) before the battle that preceded a dramatic turn of history. Con-
stantine won the battle and became a Christian, after which Christianity became a
state religion. (For a detailed description of this episode and a comparison of the
different versions, see Smith, Wace, 1877-87/1967, pp. 646-8.)

[256] In Ios 1 God delivers a speech to Joshua, which Adomnán renders with the
words: " '*Confortare et age uiriliter. Ecce ero tecum*', et cetera" (Anderson,
1961/91, p. 14), 'Be strong, and act manfully; behold I will be with you', and so

"For up to that time all that land of the English (*Saxonia*) was
shadowed by the darkness of heathenism (*gentilitas*) and ignorance,
excepting the king Oswald himself, and twelve men who had been
baptized with him, while he was in exile among the Irish"
(Anderson, 1961/91, pp. 14-7).

After the vision and the battle Oswald is ordained by God as the emperor
of Britain as a whole. This episode is followed by some remarks about its
authenticity, in which Adomnán also introduces himself. He adduces a few
more miracles and then emphasises the prophetic powers of Columba.
After this introductory chapter Book I really begins.

Usually Columba predicts future events about men; once about a
woman (I.17). Furthermore, a whole town (I.28) and the family and
possessions of a layman (I.46) are the subject of predictions. The behav-
iour of animals is also foretold: he warns of a sea monster (I.19; see
below) and announces the arrival and departure of a crane (I.48). Finally,
events about inanimate matter are forecast: for instance, in response to the
sound of shouting from beyond the water the saint announces that his ink-
horn will be emptied because of this noise-maker (I.25). As a matter of
fact, somewhat later the guest "eagerly advancing to kiss the saint" spills
the contents with the border of his garment (Anderson, 1961/91, p. 53). A
boat (I.34) and a well (I.49) play a part in prophecies about war. By
looking at gifts, presented to him for benediction, the saint knows all about
the givers' behaviour (I.50).

Columba reveals future events not only about members of the commun-
ity of the Church (saints, laity, guests of Iona, a bishop, priests, monks,
penitents, pilgrims and exiles), but also about 'the world' (kings, kings'
sons, nobility, a Roman town, a poet, a thief and an old, non-Christian
man[257]).

The content of his predictions is mainly the future destiny of persons.
He tells them about their careers and the moment and circumstances of
their deaths, sometimes provided with an advice or a warning. He knows
in advance which guest will come and what will happen next (in one

on' (*ibid.*, p. 15). This is not an exact quotation from the Vulgate. Similar phrases
can be found in Ios 1:9, 17, 18 and, for instance, in Dt 31:6 and I Par 28:20. (I
am indebted to Aidan Breen for the latter biblical references.) Adomnán may be
either quoting by heart or from another, for instance patristic, source (see
O'Loughlin, 1994b, p. 37), or he made this combination from different parts of
the Bible on purpose. More study is needed to obtain a clearer view on this. I am
mainly dealing with the text of the Vulgate because Thomas O'Loughlin (1994a)
has argued that there is no evidence for the presence of either the Vetus Latina or
the Septuagint (LXX) on Iona in Adomnán's time. It should be noted, however,
that O'Loughlin's study is based on Adomnán's *De locis sanctis*, 'On the holy
places', and a similar study should be done into the biblical quotations in VC.
[257] I.33: Columba prophesies the arrival, baptism, death and burial of this man;
Artbranán the leader of the cohort of Geon, "who has preserved natural goodness
throughout his whole life" (Anderson, 1961/91, p. 63).

instance this is not a person but an animal, *i.e.* the crane). While he is at home he knows all about people far away, for instance about who is in danger at sea (I.5) or who undertakes a voyage in vain (I.6). The latter is Cormac Ua Liatháin (monk of Columba and founder of a monastery), who goes on a pilgrimage to seek a desert place. He fails because of a person being present in his company who did not ask permission of his abbot in advance[258]. Adomnán will relate more about Cormac in Book II (see below). He knows the time and the results of battles and when people will die. The identity of future kings belongs to his knowledge. Hidden sins are not a secret to him. He is acquainted with the hiding-place and plans of a thief (I.41) and he sees that an unknown guest is actually a bishop (I.44). In advance, he knows about the debate on the date of Easter and when and where angels will visit the world (I.3). Without looking at a freshly copied Psalter he knows that only the letter i is missing (I.23). Toiling monks receive spiritual refreshment from him (I.37). Finally, his voice possesses a special gift (I.37). When he sings psalms this can be heard over a great distance[259], although people near him hear nothing extraordinary. Once when he sings near the fortress of King Brude[260], druids approach in order to stop him, "lest the sound of divine praise (...) should be heard among the heathen peoples" (Anderson, 1961/91, p. 71). Columba reacts by singing *Psalm* 44[261]. His voice sounds "like a terrible peal of thunder" (*ibid.*), which frightens both king and people extraordinarily.

One prophecy (I.19) deserves special attention, because it is about a *cetus*, 'a sea monster'. Brother Berach wants to voyage from Iona to Eth (Tiree) and he asks Columba's blessing in advance. The saint commands him to make a detour by the small islands. In the open sea lurks the danger of a prodigious monster (*monstruosum prodigium*) from which he, being terribly frightened, will hardly be able to escape.

However, Berach does not obey these words. On the open sea he and the sailors see:

"cetus   "a sea-monster[262],

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[258] This is the earliest reference to an *immram* with the motif of (unwelcome) companions whose presence on board prevents the voyagers reaching their goal. (See Oskamp, 1970, pp. 36-7.)

[259] Compare this with the Old Testament King David, who according to the non-canonical *Apocalypse of Paul* §29 sings in the heavenly Jerusalem: "his voice filled all the city" (James, 1924/89, p. 541; for more about this apocalypse, see 3.3.2.1).

[260] Brude, *aliter*: Bridei or Bredei, son of Meilochon/Maelchon is one of the Pictish kings (Anderson, 1961/91, p. xxxiii, n. 71).

[261] Ps 44 is a love-song and an ode to the king and queen, starting with: "*Eructavit cor meum verbum bonum/ dico ego opera mea regi*", 'My heart has uttered a good word: I relate my works to the king'.

[262] Anderson translates *cetus* with 'whale'; in my opinion this should be 'sea monster', which is why I emend their translation in this instance and the following two quotations (for more about this, see 2.3.1). Anderson (1961/91, p. 44, n. 50)

mirae et inmensae magnitudinis,	of marvellous and enormous size,
se instar montis eregens,	swimming on the surface, rose up like a mountain,
ora aperit patula nimis dentosa supernatans"	and opened gaping jaws, with many teeth"
(Anderson, 1961/91, p. 44)	(*ibid.*, p. 45).

Terrified and with great difficulty they row away from the beast (*belua*; used as an adjective), which causes a wash by its motion.

On that day another brother called Baíthéne wants to make the same voyage. This time Columba does not command but informs the voyager about the sea monster (*cetus*):

"Hac praeterita nocte media	"In the middle of last night,
cetus magnus	a great sea-monster
de profundo maris sé subleuauit,	rose from the depths of the ocean,
et inter Iouam et Ethicam insulam sé	and today it will rise to the surface
hodie in superficiem ereget equoris"	of the sea between the islands of Io and Eth"
(Anderson, 1961/91, p. 44)	(*ibid.*, p. 45).

Baíthéne replies that both he and the beast (*bilua*) are in God's power. The saint sends him in peace: his faith in Christ will protect him from this danger.

Thus, Baíthéne also sails away with Columba's blessing, but with no command from him to make a detour, which leads to the following events:

"transcursísque non paruís ponti spatiis	"And after covering a great stretch of the ocean
ipse et socii cetum aspiciunt;	he and his companions saw the sea-monster;
perterritísque omnibus,	and while they were all terrified,
ipse solus equor et cetum ambís	he alone undaunted, raising both his
manibus eleuatís benedicit	hands, blessed the sea and the sea-
intrepidus.	monster.
Eodemque momento bilua magna sé	In the same instant the great beast
sub fluctus inmergens	plunged beneath the waves,
nusquam deinceps eís apparuit"	and appeared to them no more"
(Anderson, 1961/91, p. 44)	(*ibid.*, p. 45).

Columba punishes, warns, praises, and blesses. Adomnán ends this book by saying that this is only a selection of the many miracles of this kind that Columba performed (I.50).

also comments: "This 'whale' is assimilated to the traditional idea of Jonah's sea-monster". I wonder what exactly is meant by this.

The theme of the second book is 'miracles of power', which are described
in forty-six short chapters. Both ecclesiastical and lay communities as well
as individuals meet with miracles. Just as in Book I most of them concern
men. One chapter (II.5) deals with a miracle in connection with a 'holy
virgin' and four chapters (II.7; II.39-41[263]) with lay women. No woman
representing the older religious order plays a part. There are three marvels
involving beasts (which will receive more attention later on). As well as
living beings, inanimate matter is also subject to miracles: for instance, a
page (II.8), a book (II.9), a dagger (II.29), and a carriage (II.43).

   Generally, a problem is observed: a shortage, an illness, an accident,
unfavourable weather, or a dangerous situation. Thanks to Columba's
miraculous powers the problem is solved. Within the scope of this study
three clusters of miracles deserve extra attention: revenge upon enemies
(II.22-25); conflicts with druids (II.11, 17, 32-34), and finally, encounters
with monsters (II.26-28, 42). I will come back to these later on.

   Columba's miracles in this second book can be classified as follows:
most of them are **healings**, with as a climax the resurrection of a child
(II.32). Moreover, he gives posthumous protection against the plague
(II.46). There are quite a few instances in which the weather miraculously
changes, and other categories are also subject to **transformation**: for
instance, water to wine (II.1); bitter (fruit) to sweet (II.2); seed to grain
(with extraordinary rapidity; II.3); bull's 'milk' to blood (II.17); poor to
rich (II.20; II.21); rich to poor (II.20); hate to love (II.41); a well springs
from a rock (II.10); a forgotten staff is found again in a distant place
(II.14); a barred gate (II.35) and a keyless door are opened (II.36).
Invulnerability is a remarkable characteristic of the objects that are made,
worn or blessed by Columba. At the same time, these objects are not able
to do damage themselves. Finally, there are miracles concerning **punish-
ment, expelling and subduing**. Columba punishes serious criminals by
announcing their (sudden) deaths (and future destinies in Hell); he 'fights'
druids by being superior to them; he expels demons and renders dangerous
beasts harmless. Obviously, this last class of miracles deserves more
attention and will be treated now.

   Columba faces both human (enemies, druids) and supernatural
(demons, monsters) adversaries. Human foes are sometimes struck by his
revenge. An evil-doing nobleman is repeatedly raiding a friend of the saint
(II.22). The third time this marauder, heading for his ship and laden with
booty, meets Columba. The saint rebukes the robber; the evil man scorns
and mocks the holy one. Columba follows him into the waters of the
ocean, where he raises his hands to heaven and prays to Christ. Then he
returns to his company speaking very terrible words: the evil-doer "who
has despised Christ in his servants" (Anderson, 1961/91, p. 125) will
never return home, because his boat with everyone in it will sink. After

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[263] A woman causes a miracle to end in II.37. The ultimate responsibility is here
ascribed to the malice of the Devil (*diabuli invidia*) and the woman's husband is
compared with Adam because of this.

some time the miracle[264] in which Columba is an expert occurs. The extremely calm weather changes: a cloud arises from the sea and a storm gathers. While the sea around remains calm "this one squall drowned the plunderers and cast them down to hell", to which Adomnán comments: "a wretched but a worthy fate" (Anderson, 1961/91, p. 127).

There are more enemies who have to contend with Columba's revenge. The saint puts a Pictish exile under the protection of a rich man living on Islay (II.23). However, after a few days the latter kills the Pict. The holy one considers this treason as a lie not to himself but to God[265]. He comments: "his name will be removed from the book of life" and he predicts the time of the murderer's death, when he will be "carried off to the infernal regions (*infernalia loca*)" (*ibid.*, p. 127). Scorn and mockery are the rich man's response in midsummer, but in autumn the words of Columba come true.

Subsequently, Columba is excommunicating other persecutors of churches (related to the marauder described in II.22) on the island of Hinba (II.24). Prompted by the Devil (*diabuli instinctu*) one of the evil-doers rushes in with a spear. One of the monks tries to protect the saint with his body. Wearing Columba's cowl he survives the attack unharmed. The criminal, however, believes the spear to have transfixed its target. A year later his death is announced by Columba and he is indeed killed in a fight. It is said that the javelin that pierced him was thrown in Columba's name. After his death the fight ceases.

As a last instance of 'revenge upon enemies' Adomnán mentions an event from the time that the saint was still a deacon in Ireland (II.25). A cruel oppressor of the innocent pursues a young girl. She runs for protection to Columba's master Gemmán, who summons Columba for assistance. However, the pursuer shows no respect and pierces the girl with a spear under the clerics' robes. She lies dead at their feet. The old man turns in distress to the young one, whereupon the latter pronounces a sentence upon the criminal: "In the same hour in which the soul of the girl whom he has slain ascends to heaven, let the soul of her slayer descend to hell" (*ibid.*, p. 131). Immediately, the killer falls dead.

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[264] After healing miracles, it is miraculous changes of the weather that occur most frequently in this book.

[265] Compare this view on the crime with the murder of the exile (Eochu Bélbuide) in chapter 1: there the king under whose protection the exile was has to be compensated for the crime. Here it is God whose protection is ultimately violated. The words of Columba are an adaptation of St Peter's in Act 5:4. Columba says: "*Non mihi sed deo ille infelix homunculus mentitus est (...)*", 'That unhappy being has lied not to me, but to God (...)', (Anderson, 1961/91, pp. 126-7) and St Peter's words are: "(...) *non es mentitus hominibus sed Deo*", '(...) you have lied not to people but to God'. Somewhat further in the text (II.25) there is an explicit reference to this episode from the Bible, related to a killer of a young girl, who falls dead at once, just as Ananias before St Peter (Act 5:5). Cp. also II.22, referred to above, where Columba says that the evil-doer despises Christ in his servants. Therefore, the wronged party is again the divine one.

As well as revenge upon criminals, encounters with druids play a part in Columba's life. II.11 describes a well in Pictish territory which is venerated by the 'heathen' populace (*plebs gentilis*) as a God, "the devil deluding their understanding" (*ibid.*, p. 109). It is very dangerous either to wash hands or feet in or to drink from the water: it causes all kinds of illness, for instance leprosy, half blindness and lameness. This is caused "by devilish art, God permitting it" (*ibid.*). Columba hears about this well and heads for it. The druids (*magi*), "whom he often repelled from himself in confusion and defeat" (*ibid.*), rejoice at this event: they expect him to become the water's victim. Columba first blesses the well raising his hand in invocation of Christ's name. Then he washes his hands and feet and also drinks from the water. On that day the demons (*daemones*) withdraw from the well and the water becomes, moreover, curative.

Columba expels — without knowing it — a demon from a milk-vessel by the saving sign (of the cross) he makes towards it (II.16). Then there is an evil-doing farmer who, commanded by Columba, milks a bull (II.17). He performs this by diabolic art (*ars diabulica*). The saint's intention is not the confirmation of these sorceries (*maleficia*, which literally means 'evil deeds') but to confound them before the crowd. Columba blesses the vessel with milk, which turns out to be blood. It has been bleached by the imposture of demons (*daemonum fraus*) to deceive humanity, Columba explains. The bull, wasted to the point of death by this trick, is sprinkled with water blessed by the saint, by which he is cured with miraculous rapidity.

In these last two miracles not only does the saint enter upon a struggle against druids but he also fights against demons. His acts are life-giving, whereas his opponents side with death. Life and death are central in the following miracle, which is the first of a cluster of three about confrontations with druids (II.32-34).

A son of a Pictish family who have just been converted to Christianity becomes mortally ill (II.32). To this the druids react with taunt and reproach, magnifying their own Gods as the stronger and belittling the God of the Christians as the weaker. Columba arrives when the boy has just died. He encourages the family to have no doubt at all of the divine omnipotence and goes alone into the room where the body lies. Kneeling down he prays and cries. Then he rises and says: "In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ be restored to life, and stand upon thy feet" (*ibid.*, p. 141). The soul returns to the body; the boy lives again. Adomnán concludes that the prophetic and apostolic Columba shares this miracle with the prophets Elijah and Elisha and with the apostles Peter, Paul and John.

In the same period, Columba asks the druid Broichan[266] to release an Irish female slave who is a pilgrim captive (*peregrina captiua*; II.33). The

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[266] Broichan is foster-father to King Brude; he might belong to Irish legend (Anderson, 1961/91, p. xxxiii). Compare the relation between the *druí* Cathbad and King Conchobar: here, the *druí* is not only the spiritual but also the literal father of the king.

druid refuses and the saint threatens him with death if he does not obey
before his departure from the province. All this takes place at King
Brude's court. Hereafter, Columba takes a white stone from the river Ness
and predicts that the stone will cure many among this 'heathen' people. He
goes on to announce that Broichan has been struck by an angel: the glass
from which he drank has been broken into many pieces and now the druid
is dying. In conformity with the saint's prediction two messengers from the
king arrive with this 'news'. The holy one sends two men with the stone.
After the slave-girl has been set free the druid must drink water in which
the stone has been dipped. This will cure him. However, if he refuses he
will immediately die. Broichan gives in and is healed. The stone, which
incidentally floats in water because the saint's blessing cannot be sub-
merged, is added to the king's treasures. Many are cured by it, but if
someone's time has come the stone is nowhere to be found. This happens
on the day of the king's death.

This is not the end of the discord between the saint and the druid.
Broichan threatens to hinder Columba's departure with an adverse wind
and a mist of darkness (II.34). The saint is not impressed: after all,
everything is governed by God's omnipotence. Upon the day of his
departure a large crowd follows him to the long lake of the river Ness.
The druids exult for a great mist and a stormy adverse wind arise.

Adomnán relates in an intermezzo that the accomplishment of these
things by the art of demons is not strange. Bishop Germanus[267] was also
attacked at sea by hosts of evil spirits (*daemoniorum legiones*) with perils,
storms and a mist of darkness. Because of his prayer everything became
calm and the mist disappeared[268].

Columba invokes Christ. Then the boat sails against the wind extra-
ordinarily quickly. After a short time, the direction of the wind changes.
With this new, favourable wind he reaches the desired harbour.

Apart from dangerous people Columba also encounters harmful beasts,
i.e. monsters. Adomnán placed a unit of these texts after the cluster
'vengeance upon enemies' (II.22-25) and introduces it with the following
words: "Now we shall tell some few things about animals (*de bestiis*[269])"
(*ibid.*, p. 131).

On the Isle of Skye, Columba secludes himself from his company to
pray in a dense wood (II.26). Then he encounters a wild boar of remark-
able size (*mirae magnitudinis aper*) pursued by hunting dogs. The saint
stops and regards it from a distance.

"Tum deinde inuocato dei nomine   "Then he raised his holy hand, with

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[267] This is St Germanus of Auxerre (†446).

[268] In this part the *Life of Germanus* by Constantius of Lyon was used (Anderson,
1961/91, p. 145, n. 172).

[269] Literally, it says 'beasts'. The beasts occurring here are in accordance with this
study's criteria for monsters; see 2.3.1. Incidentally, this way of ordering smaller
textual units is an instance of the structural use of *divisio* mentioned in 2.1.

sancta eleuata manu cum intenta   invocation of the name of God, and
dicit ad eum oratione: praying intently said to the boar:
'Vlterius huc procedere noles;   'You will approach no further;
in loco ad quem nunc deuenisti   in the place to which you have now
morire.'   come, die.'
Quo sancti in siluís personante uerbo   When these words of the saint rang
                                     out in the wood,
non solum ultra accedere non ualuit,   not only was the wild beast unable to
                                     advance further,
sed ante faciem ipsius terribilis ferus   but before Columba's face it immedi-
uerbi eius uirtute mortificatus cito   ately fell, slain by the power of his
conruit"   terrible word"
(Anderson, 1961/91, p. 132)   (*ibid.*, p. 133).

This first beast he faces in a forest; the second turns up in a river
(II.27). During a stay in the province of the Picts, Columba has to cross
the river Ness. When Columba arrives he sees a Pict being buried by other
Picts on the bank. Columba is told that not long before this man, who had
been swimming in the river, was seized and most savagely bitten by a
water beast (*"aquatilis praeripiens bestia mursu momordit seuissimo"*,
Anderson, 1961/91, p. 132). Some of the people present had tried to
rescue him but they were too late. In spite of this danger Columba wants
one of the brothers to swim across in order to fetch a boat. At once, Lugne
mocu Min volunteers and plunges into the water, dressed in his tunic.

"Sed bilua, quae prius non tam   "But the monster, whose appetite had
satiata quam in praedam accensa,   earlier been not so much sated as
                                      whetted for prey,
in profundo fluminis latitabat.   lurked in the depth of the river.
Sentiens eo nante turbatam supra   Feeling the water above disturbed by
aquam, subito emergens natatilis ad   Lugne's swimming, it suddenly swam
hominem in medio natantem alueo   up to the surface, and with gaping
cum ingenti fremitu aperto cucurrit   mouth and with great roaring rushed
ore.   towards the man swimming in the
                                      middle of the stream.

Vir tum beatus uidens, omnibus qui   While all that were there, barbarians
inerant tam barbarís quam etiam   and even the brothers, were struck
fratribus nimio terrore perculsís,   down with extreme terror,
cum salutare sancta eleuata manu in   the blessed man, who was watching,
uacuo aere crucis pincxisset signum   raised his holy hand and drew the
inuocato dei nomine   saving sign of the cross in the empty
                                      air; and then, invoking the name of
                                      God,

feroci imperauit bestiae, dicens: he commanded the savage beast, and
                                      said:

'Noles ultra progredi,   'You will go no further.
nec hominem tangas.   Do not touch the man;
Retro citius reuertere.'   turn backward speedily.'

Tum uero bestia hac sancti audita uoce retrorsum acsi funibus retraheretur uelociore recursu fugit tremefacta, quae prius Lugneo nanti eo usque appropinquauit ut hominem inter et bestiam non amplius esset quam unius contuli longitudo" (Anderson, 1961/91, pp. 132, 134)

Then, hearing this command of the saint, the beast, as if pulled back with ropes, fled terrified in swift retreat; although it had before approached so close to Lugne as he swam that there was no more than the length of one short pole between man and beast" (*ibid.*, pp. 133, 135).

The brothers glorify God in Columba and the 'pagan barbarians' (*gentiles barbari*) magnify the God of the Christians.

The last miracle in this sequence is a kind of parting gift (II.28). Columba tells his brothers who are working in a western plain on Iona that he will die and to comfort them he blesses the island of Iona:

"Quos hoc audito uerbo ualde tristificatos uidens, consulari eos in quantum fieri possit conatus ambas manus eleuat sanctas, et totam hanc nostram benedicens insulam ait: 'Ex hoc huius horulae momento omnia uiperarum uenina nullo modo

in huius insulae terrulís aut hominibus aut pecoribus nocere poterunt, quandiu Christi mandata eiusdem commorationis incolae obseruauerint'" (Anderson, 1961/91, p. 134)

"When he saw that they were greatly saddened by hearing this, he tried to comfort them as far as might be, and raising both his holy hands he blessed all this island of ours, and said: 'From this moment of this hour, all poisons of snakes shall be powerless to harm men or cattle in the lands of this island, so long as the inhabitants of that dwelling-place shall observe the commandments of Christ'" (*ibid.*, p. 135).

The last kind of monster in Book II is a threat to a pilgrim-voyager. This is Cormac, already mentioned in Book I and now, in Book II, Adomnán describes his second and third voyage (II.42). The third voyage is relevant to this study. On the ocean, Cormac and his company come into deadly danger. For fourteen days they are sailing to the North:

"eiusmodi nauigatio ultra humani excursus modum et inremeabilis uidebatur.

Vnde contigit ut post decimam eiusdem quarti et decimi horam diei, quidam pene insustentabiles undique et ualde formidabiles consurgerent

"such a voyage appeared to be beyond the range of human exploration, and one from which there could be no return.

And so it happened, after the tenth hour of the fourteenth day, that there arose all around them almost overwhelming and very dread-

terrores.

ful objects of terror;

Quaedam quippe usque in id temporis inuisae mare obtegentes occurrerant tetrae et infestae nimis bestiolae, quae horribili impetu carinam et latera pupimque et proram ita forti feriebant percusura, ut pellicium tectum nauis penetrales putarentur penetrare posse.

for they were met by loathsome and exceedingly dangerous small creatures covering the sea, such as had never been seen before that time; and these struck with terrible impact the bottom and sides, the stern and prow, with so strong a thrust that they were thought able to pierce and penetrate the skin-covering of the ship.

Quae, ut hí qui inerant ibidem postea narrarunt, prope magnitudine ranarum aculeís permolestae

As those that were present there related afterwards, these creatures were about the size of frogs, very injurious by reason of their stings,

non tamen uolatiles sed natatiles erant;

but they did not fly, they swam.

sed et remorum infestabant palmulas.

And moreover they damaged the blades of the oars.

Quibus uisís inter cetera monstra, quae non huius est temporis enarrare, Cormaccus cum nautís comitibus, ualde turbati et pertimescentes, deum qui est in angustís pius et oportunus auxiliator inlacrimati precantur"

Seeing these with the other prodigies, which this is not the time to recount, Cormac and his fellow-sailors were in great alarm and terror, and with tears prayed to God, who is a true and ready helper in times of need"

(Anderson, 1961/91, p. 168)

(*ibid.*, p. 169).

At the same time, Columba is present with Cormac in the spirit. He gathers the brothers by sounding the bell so that they will pray together in the oratory for the sake of the voyagers and he says:

"Fratres, tota intentione pro Cormaco orate, qui nunc humanae discursionis limitem inmoderate nauigando excessit.

"Brothers, pray with your whole might for Cormac, who now in his voyage has far exceeded the bounds of human travel.

Nunc quasdam monstruosas ante non uisas et pene indicibiles patitur horrificas perturbationes"

Now he endures the terrors of certain horrible and monstrous things never before seen, and almost indescribable"

(Anderson, 1961/91, p. 168)

(*ibid.*, p. 169).

They must share spiritually in the sufferings of the voyagers and have to pray in order to change the wind from a southerly into a northerly. After the tearful prayer, Columba announces the weather change and the coming of Cormac's company. Columba's words come true and Adomnán under-

lines the prophetical prescience and the power of the saint in commanding the winds and ocean in Jesus Christ's name.

Book II ends with a series of miracles that happen after the death of Columba in Adomnán's time (II.44-46). There is such a severe drought that it is as if God's curse is on the land because of transgressions by the people[270]. The monks take Columba's tunic in which he died and go into a field where they raise the tunic three times into the air and shake it. They go to a place called 'the hill of the angels' where Columba had spoken with angels, open the books that the saint has written and read from them. On that day a great rain falls and the drought is over (II.44). Three times the direction of the wind changes, once by their using Columba's garments, his books, fasting, psalm singing and invoking the saint's name, and twice by complaining to Columba (II.45). Twice the plague ravages parts of Europe, but two peoples are unharmed: the Picts and the Irish in Britain. This is not because they are without great sins, but because the monasteries of Columba are within the boundaries of both peoples (II.46). The saint thus posthumously protects his followers from illness and grants them favourable weather.

The third book consists of twenty-two short chapters and one long one, which is the final chapter. It is about the events concerning Columba's death (III.23). The theme of Book III is 'angelic visions'. With these words Adomnán designates miraculous appearances of angels and of light or fire. Sometimes these two categories are combined: either as 'angelic light' or as the appearance of both angels and light or fire at the same time.

Just as in the case of the second book I shall dwell upon the conflicts with enemies. In Book III only supernatural foes occur. Apart from these enemies, some details concerning Columba's death will be highlighted.

A large majority of the appearances fall to Columba. Individual male clerics come second. Only once is it a (lay) woman, Columba's mother, who is visited in a dream by an angel (III.1). Sometimes a group of persons see a supernatural light: first, coming from the house on Hinba in which Columba sings unknown spiritual songs and receives revelations in seclusion (III.18). Second, on the night of Columba's death two groups of people see a supernatural light: Columba's servant and other brothers; and a monk together with fisher folk (III.23). Finally, elect persons see both angels and lights at Columba's grave (III.23).

Angels appear nearly twice as often as the light/fire miracles. Once, Columba sees recently drowned monks who are fighting for a soul (III.13; see below).

The purpose of the miracles is in most cases to demonstrate Columba's holiness and excellence. Another important motif is the carrying of souls to Heaven by angels. Angels are sent three times to collect Columba's soul; twice they come in vain (the second time without a reason being given;

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[270] For more about God's curse and blessing, see chapter 3.

III.22-23). Then there are three incidental miracles. First, Columba receives a glass book[271] in which the ordination of kings is to be found (III.5). This is quite a remarkable story. Columba seems to be less holy in this instance: he refuses to ordain a king because he prefers the future king's brother. The disobedient saint is struck with a scourge by an angel which results in a life-long scar[272]. After three nocturnal angelic visits Columba gives in. Second, Columba is aided by angels when he is attacked by demons (III.8; for more about this, see below) and third, Columba calls in the help of an angel present in his hut on Iona to save a brother, who falls from a roof in Durrow (III.15).

I now advert to the confrontations with enemies that occur in Book III. Supernatural foes sometimes appear when somebody dies. A fight between demons and angels occurs; both parties are after the soul[273]. The first time that Adomnán speaks about this combat is in the story about the death of one of Columba's monks, a Briton (III.6). Columba witnesses the war in the sky between holy angels and adversary powers (*adversariae*

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[271] According to Enright (1985, p. 90), this glass book refers to the book in which the prophet Samuel writes the law of kingship (I Sm 10:25). In his opinion this episode has a symbolic function. Columba would be portrayed here as Samuel, by which portrayal Adomnán aims both to present the abbot of Iona as royal elector and consecrator (Enright, 1985, p. 91), and to respond to Armagh's challenges which present St Patrick as the 'new Moses' (*ibid.*, pp. 93-5). His line of reasoning is convincing on the whole, but at the same time it perhaps places undue emphasis on certain elements in VC. First, I do not think that the parallel with Samuel is as obvious as Enright claims. Both the material and the contents of the two books that Enright compares are quite different: there is no book *of glass* mentioned in the Bible and furthermore, this glass book of the ordination of kings (*vitreus ordinationis regum liber*) in VC III.5 seems to contain names instead of a law on kingship (*lex regni*), which is the subject of the book (*liber*) in *I Samuel*. Second, in addition to this, Columba is compared with more than one biblical person (see, for instance, Picard, 1985, p. 76) which casts a doubt on the way in which Enright makes Samuel into a key figure. I would say, in this particular case, that Columba's disobedience to God also gives rise to an association with his namesake the prophet Jonah, who is disobedient to God and afterwards punished (Ion 1).

[272] The life-long scar Columba receives in this chapter from the angel could be compared with the life-long consequence for Jacob when the angel he fights with touches the sinew of his thigh, which shrinks (Gn 32:24-32). St Fursa also receives a permanent scar during a vision in which he sees sinners punished in Hell (see Bede's HE III.19; for more about this text, see below).

[273] A fight between angels and demons in the sky could of course be connected with the eschatological combat between the Archangel Michael and his angels and the great red dragon (or: the Devil) and his angels in Apc 12:7. The motif of angelic guidance of the soul after the departure from its body can be found in the *Apocalypse of Paul* §§14-18 (James, 1924/89, pp. 531-5). In the Syriac version a conflict between good and evil angels is explicitly mentioned (James, 1924/89, p. 531). For more about this motif, see McNamara (1975, pp. 109-13), and Willard (1935); for more about the *Apocalypse of Paul*, see 3.3.2.1.

potestates). Thanks to the 'arbiter' Christ the soul of the monk, here referred to as a 'pilgrim' (*peregrinus*), is carried to the Heavenly country.

The Enemy also attacks Columba himself (III.8). The saint retires to a 'wild place' (*saltus*) to pray. "And when he had begun to pray there, suddenly, (...) he saw a foul and very black array of demons (*tetra et nigerrima daemonum acies*) making war against him with iron spits" (Anderson, 1961/91, p. 193). Thanks to the Holy Spirit he knows that this crowd wants to attack his monastery and to slaughter many of his brothers with these spikes. Wearing St Paul's armour[274] he fights on his own against these innumerable enemies (*emuli*). The combat goes on and on; the parties appear to be each other's equals. Then God's angels appear and the fight ends: the demons are repelled and withdraw for fear of them.

This is the end of the battle, but not the end of the demons. Columba relates in his monastery that the deadly foes (*illi exitiabiles emuli*) head for the land of Eth where they bring pestilential diseases. Many people die; Baíthéne's monastery survives with almost no deaths (only one man) thanks to the defence of fasting and praying against the invasion of the demons.

Apart from the angels who fight with the Enemy, human souls sometimes also join the combat. The soul of a woman fights on the angels' side for her husband's soul against the hostile powers (III.10); the souls of monks who have just drowned fight for the soul of their guest who has also drowned (III.13). In the first case the husband's righteousness supports the fight against the Enemy; in the second, angels come to the monks' assistance because of Columba's and the brothers' tearful and earnest prayers. The demons lose the fight in both cases.

Sometimes souls leave for Heaven without any opposition (for instance, III.7; III.9; III.11 and III.12) and neither do the Enemies appear on the death of an old 'pagan' called Emchath (III.14), who "preserved natural goodness through his whole life, into extreme old age" (Anderson, 1961/91, p. 201).

In the last chapter (III.23) Adomnán repeats the blessing of Iona by Columba:

"Quibus finitís ut erat in uechiculo sedens	"After which, still sitting in the wagon,
ad orientem suam conuertens faciem	he turned his face to the east,
insulam cum insulanís benedixit habitatoribus.	and blessed the island, with the islanders its inhabitants.
Ex qua die, ut in supra memorato craxatum est libello,	And from then to the present day, as has been written in the above-mentioned book,
uiperarum uenina trisulcarum linguarum	the poison of three-forked tongues of vipers
usque in hodiernum diem nullo modo aut homini aut pecori nocere	has not been able to do any injury to either man or beast"

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[274] This refers to Eph 6:11-18.

potuere"
(Anderson, 1961/91, p. 218)   (*ibid.*, p. 219).

The only other animal we meet in Book III is the saint's white horse which sadly comes to say goodbye because of Columba's near death. Like a human being, it weeps and its tears[275] fall in the saint's lap (III.23).

Adomnán gives the last words the saint utters before he dies. Life will be good if one follows the divine prescriptions, is his message:

> "I commend to you, my children, these latest words, that you shall have among yourselves mutual and unfeigned charity, with peace. If you follow this course after the example of the holy fathers, God, who gives strength to the good, will help you; and I, abiding with him, shall intercede for you. And not only will the necessaries of this life be sufficiently provided by him, but also the rewards of eternal good things will be bestowed, that are prepared for those who follow the divine commandments" (Anderson, 1961/91, p. 225).

An element occurring again and again during Columba's life also plays an important role in the days immediately following his death: the weather. For three days and nights — from his death till his burial — there is a great storm around Iona. Because of this, nobody from outside is able to attend his funeral, which he had already predicted. When he is buried the storm subsides and the sea becomes calm (III.23).

The work ends with an admonition to copy it precisely and to check it thoroughly. Finally, a request is made to pray "for me, Dorbbéne[276]" (Anderson, 1961/91, p. 235) so that he may receive eternal life.

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[275] In BMMM Cú Chulainn's horse also comes to him and lets "great round tears of blood fall on his feet" (Tymoczko, 1981, p. 43) when it is clear that the hero's death is near. Isidore says about the horse in his *Etymologiae*: "(...) *interfectis vel morientibus dominis multi lacrimas fundunt. Solum enim equum propter hominem lacrimare et doloris affectum sentire*" (Lindsay, 1911/71, XII.1.43), '(...) when their masters are slain or are dying, many shed tears. The horse is the only creature that weeps for man and feels the emotion of grief' (Brehaut, 1912, p. 224). Compare also Pliny's *Naturalis Historia* (VIII.LXIV.157) about Sybarite horses: "(...) *et amissos lugent dominos: lacrimas interdum desiderio fundunt*" (Rackham, 1940/83, p. 110), '(...) and when they lose their masters [they] mourn for them: sometimes they shed tears at the bereavement' (*ibid.*, p. 111). (For more about this work, see 2.3.2.1; for more examples of this idea, see for instance André, 1986, pp. 68-9.)

[276] This is the scribe of the oldest manuscript of VC: Generalia I (Anderson, 1961/91, pp. liv, lxi).

2.3 The monsters

2.3.1 The monsters' appearance

There are five kinds of monster in the text which will be treated here separately. They can be distinguished as follows: there are three kinds of aquatic monster (the enormous sea monster, the river monster and the small ocean monsters) and two kinds of terrestrial monster (the wild boar and the serpents).

The first kind (I.19) is a water monster. The monster has several aspects: first, it is designated by the words *cetus*, 'any large sea animal, a sea monster[277]'; *monstruosum prodigium*, 'monstrous monster'; *belua* (used as an adjective), 'a beast (distinguished for size or ferocity), a monster, (...)', and *bilua* (this word is a variant spelling of *belua*[278]). Second, it is of marvellous and enormous size (*mirae et inmensae magnitudinis*). It rises as a mountain above the water's surface (3). It opens its mouth (4) and shows many teeth (5). It causes a wash because of its movements (6). It lives in the depths of the sea (*profundum maris*; 7), but sometimes it surfaces as it does in this incident (8), where it is seen in the sea between the islands of Iona and Tiree. Later it disappears into the depths again.

The second monster (II.26) is designated *aper*, 'a wild boar, (...)', and *ferus*, 'a wild animal, wild beast' (1). The beast is of marvellous size (*mirae magnitudinis*; 2) and it lives in a dense wood (*silva densa*) on Skye (3). It is pursued by hounds[279] (4) and rushes at the saint (5).

The third kind (II.27) is a water monster. The words referring to it are *aquatilis bestia*, 'water beast', and *bilua* (1). The monster is wild, savage (*ferox*; 2). It infests the river Ness (3): a man was caught and killed by the beast (4). Just as the first monster it is initially in the depths (5); then it surfaces (6) and opens its mouth (7). Hereafter, the description deviates: the river monster rushes at a potential victim with great roaring (8). Like the first monster this monster disappears too. It flees fast, being terrified (9).

The fourth kind (II.28 and III.23) does not seem to be monstrous at first sight: it concerns serpents. However, these represent an instance of an important mythological motif (a supernatural reason for the absence of certain beasts in certain places; see 2.3.2.4). Moreover, one should include serpents as they may have a supernatural aspect because of their affiliation

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[277] Lewis and Short (1879/1991, *s.v.*) add: 'particularly a species of whale, a shark, dog-fish, seal, dolphin, etc.'. The Latin *cetus* derives from the Greek κῆτος, 'any sea monster or huge fish'. This is "a word applied to whales, dolphins, tunny and various defined and undefined monsters with or without mythological functions or significance" (Boardman, 1987, p. 73).

[278] Picard (1982b, p. 226, n. 4) lists *bilua* as first example of Hiberno-Latin cases of shifts from *e* to *i*.

[279] This element is absent in the manuscripts at the British Library (Anderson, 1961/91, p. lviii).

with the Devil (in Christianity). The fourth kind of monster is designated by the term *vipera*, 'viper, adder, snake, serpent' (1). It concerns serpents living on Iona (2). In the third book (III.23) the vipers have an extraordinary characteristic: they have three-forked tongues (3). Apart from their tongues, the text does not describe them; Columba's blessing makes their poison lose its power[280] (4).

The fifth and last kind (II.42) consists of small water monsters, designated *terrores* (sg. *terror*), 'dread-inspiring objects/beings', and *bestiolae* (sg. *bestiola*), 'small beasts' (1). They swim everywhere around the boat in the ocean in the North outside the human sphere of exploration (2). They are almost unbearable, very terrible, hideous, excessively dangerous, monstrous, almost indescribable and dreadful (3). They are the size of frogs (4) and possess stings (*aculei*) which make them very harmful (5). They have never been seen before (6). They attack the boat and the blades of the oars (7). There are more monsters (*cetera monstra*) in their company (8), but the text does not offer any information on them.

The huge sea monster is part of an episode that demonstrates Columba's prophetic power; the other four kinds of monster are found in chapters about his power to work miracles.

2.3.2 Sources and variant versions

The description of the monsters given above is now followed by the search for possible predecessors and/or later developments of these. The same textual traditions which were studied in chapter 1 will receive attention in this chapter: canonical and non-canonical scripture, Isidore's *Etymologiae*, other relevant Latin texts from either the classical or the Christian culture, Hiberno-Latin, Old and Middle Irish texts. This search is done in order to establish whether the monsters should be categorised as belonging to either the 'native', 'imported', or 'integrated' kind.

2.3.2.1 The enormous sea monster

The first monster is referred to as *prodigium*, *cetus*, and *belua/bilua* (1). *Prodigium* is too general a term to serve as a guideline to search for similar biblical monsters because it usually means miracle or sign. *Belua* and *cetus* are good clues for a search for similar beasts in the **Vulgate**.

Belua occurs twice; once as a metaphor (II Mcc 4:25) and on the second occasion in a beautiful chapter (43) in *Ecclesiasticus* or *Liber Iesu filii Sirach*, 'The Book of Jesus son of Sirach', on the miracles that God performs in nature. Besides, it contains a warning for those who will sail the sea:

"qui navigat mare enarrat periculum   Anyone who sails the sea tells of its
eius   danger

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[280] Thus, this blessing of people and cattle is a curse for the serpents.

et audientes auribus	and listening to it with ears
non admirabimur	we will not[281] be astonished.
illic praeclara et mirabilia opera	There are splendid and wondrous works
varia genera bestiarum et omnium pecorum	various kinds of beast and all kinds of animal
et creatura beluarum"	and the creation of monsters

(Sir 43:26-27[282]).

This quotation illustrates the idea that monsters are part of the creation, living in the sea and met by sailors, but it does not serve as a parallel for the enormous sea monster in VC as it is too general. I will, therefore, now turn to the biblical sections that deal with the word *cetus*.

The large sea monsters (*"cete grandia"*) were created on the fifth day (Gn 1:21) and they are summoned in Azarias's hymn to praise God together with the rest of the Creation (*"cete"*; Dn 3:79[283]). The sea monsters mentioned in these two texts form a collective category, to which the *beluae* in Sir 43:27 also belong: the large water creatures created and ruled by God. It goes without saying that the sea monster in VC is part of this class, but we need examples of individual specimens to make a more specific comparison. For this reason, biblical texts about *cetus* in the singular will now be dealt with.

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[281] Some manuscripts read *nostris* instead of *non*, which results in: 'listening to it with our ears we will be astonished'. This is closer to the original text. The preceding verse in the original text is also interesting in the context of this study. It refers to God creating order in the Chaos of the primeval waters, which are closely connected with the monsters of Chaos: "By His counsel He hath stilled the deep, / And hath planted the islands in the ocean. / They that go down to the sea tell of its extent, / And when our ears hear it we are astonished. / Therein are marvels, the most wondrous of His works, / All kinds of living things, and the monsters of Rahab" (Sir 43:23-25, in: Charles, 1913/63, I, pp. 477-8). The editors are of the opinion that the planting of islands in the ocean might signify that the islands came into existence as consequence of God's fight with the dragon of the sea (*ibid.*, p. 477, n. 23). See also the more recent translation by Patrick Skehan and the commentary by Alexander di Lella (*id.*, 1987, pp. 487, 494-5). Rahab occurs (among other things) as the name of one of the mythical primeval monsters in the Hebrew Old Testament (Job 9:13 (the helpers of Rahab); 26:12; Ps 89:10; Is 51:9). This tradition of the monster Rahab was not taken over by the Vulgate: Rahab was translated in these four verses as: *qui portant orbem*, 'they who bear the world'; *superbus*, 'the proud one'; *superbus* (Ps 88:11), and *superbus* respectively. (For more about the translation of Hebrew monster terms in (the Septuagint and) the Vulgate, see Kiessling, 1970.)

[282] This is in the LXX: Sir 43:24-25. The variant readings in the manuscripts show more textual problems in these verses, both in the Hebrew and Greek text, but I leave this further aside.

[283] A Hiberno-Latin version of this hymn can be found in the Irish *Liber Hymnorum*, 'Book of Hymns', where the text reads instead of *cete: beluæ/bilue/belua* (Bernard, Atkinson, 1898, I, p. 196).

First, there is the large fish sent by God that swallows the prophet
Jonah (Ion 2:1) and keeps him in its belly for three days and nights. It has
to be admitted that most manuscripts give *piscis* (which is in conformity
with the Hebrew[284]); *cetus* is a variant reading. This beast seems to be a
representative of the huge sea monsters, created on the fifth day and
obeying God's orders. However, because of Jonah's words, another
dimension is also hinted at. When the prophet is in the belly or womb
(*venter, uterus*; Ion 2:1-2) of the beast, he prays to God. In this prayer the
mythological imagery of the waters, the Abyss, the Deep is drawn upon:

"(…) de ventre inferni	From the belly of the Underworld
clamavi	I have called
et exaudisti vocem meam[285]	and you have listened to my voice
et proiecisti me	and you have thrown me down
in profundum in corde maris	into the depths in the heart of the sea
et flumen circumdedit me	and the flood has enclosed me
omnes gurgites tui	all your waters
et fluctus tui super me transierunt[286]	and your waves have passed over me
(…)	(…)
circumdederunt me aquae	the waters have enclosed me
usque ad animam[287]	as far as [my] soul
abyssus vallavit me	the Abyss has surrounded me
pelagus operuit caput meum	the sea has covered my head
ad extrema montium descendi	I have descended to the lowest parts of the mountains
terrae vectes concluserunt	the bars of the earth have confined
me in aeternum (…)"	me for ever (…)
(Ion 2:3-4, 6-7).	

The belly of the beast is thus compared with the Netherworld, the place of
the dead. This comparison is taken up again in the New Testament in the
gospel of Matthew. Here, Jonah is compared with Jesus and the beast —

[284] The Hebrew text reads רג נרול, 'a large fish' (for the text of the Hebrew
Bible, see Elliger, Rudolph and Weil, 1967/77).
[285] This is an adapted quotation from Ps 129:1-2: "*De profundis clamavi ad te
Domine / Domine exaudi vocem meam* (…)", 'From the depths I have called at
you, Lord / Lord, listen to my voice', and from Lam 3:55-56: "*invocavi nomen
tuum Domine de lacis novissimis / vocem meam audisti* (…)", 'I have invoked
your name, Lord, from the lowest pit / you have heard my voice'. The 'depths'
and the 'pit' are designations for the place of the dead; the term in Jonah's prayer
for the lower regions — *infernus* — reads in the original Hebrew text: מבטן שאול,
'from the womb of Sheol/the Underworld'. For more about the concepts of the
Underworld and Hell, see 3.3.2.5.
[286] The last part of PsH 41:8 is quoted here; PsG has a somewhat different
reading.
[287] Cp. Ps 68:2 and Lam 3:54.

called *cetus*[288] — with the 'heart of the earth':

"sicut enim Ionas	For just as Jonah was
in ventre ceti	in the belly of the sea monster
tribus diebus et tribus noctibus	during three days and three nights
sic erit Filius hominis	so will the Son of Man be
in corde terrae	in the heart of the earth
tribus diebus et tribus noctibus"	during three days and three nights
(Mt 12:40).	

Although Jonah's sea monster plays a role in these two books of the Bible (Ion and Mt), there is no elaborate description of the beast. However, one can assume a few points of similarity between this monster and the one in VC. The two sea monsters share the designation *cetus* (1); they are huge (2); they open their mouths (4); live in the depths of the sea (7), and may surface occasionally (8). Jonah's sea monster is compared with the belly of the Underworld, the heart of the sea, the Abyss and the lowest parts of the mountains, whereas VC's sea monster is compared with a mountain (3). The description differs here, therefore.

Before drawing a conclusion I need to devote attention to another individual specimen of large sea monsters. Leviathan, referred to as *cetus* in Is 27:1[289], has been introduced in chapter 1. Three of Leviathan's characteristics described in 1.3.2 are relevant to the comparison with VC's sea monster. Both monsters are called *cetus* (1); they are huge (2) and live in the sea (7). There are a few new points of comparison. In God's speech to Job about Behemoth and Leviathan the latter's mouth is mentioned. One of the challenges that God utters is: who will go into the midst of Leviathan's mouth (Iob 41:4)? The impression of an open mouth (4) is also given by the description of Leviathan breathing fire while a flame leaps from its mouth (Iob 41:10, 12). Furthermore, the fearfulness (*formido*) of its teeth is mentioned (Iob 41:5) but there is no explicit reference to their number (5). VC's monster causes a wash (6); the deep sea is boiling because of Leviathan (Iob 41:22). When Leviathan raises itself, the angels shall fear (Iob 41:16). Could this express the image of the huge monster rising above the waters (8), towering like a mountain (3)? There is, however, no explicit reference to a mountain, therefore this latter aspect is not a valid point of comparison.

There is one last instance of *cetus*[290] in the Vulgate, again in the *Book of Job*. Job asks God: "*numquid mare sum ego aut cetus quia circumdedisti me carcere*" (Iob 7:12), 'Am I the sea or a sea monster that you have enclosed me in a prison?'. This refers to God's cosmological combat in which the waters and the primeval water monsters were constrained. The text gives no further information about this *cetus*. I have now

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[288] The Greek text reads κῆτος, 'sea monster' (see Nestle, Aland, 1898/1975).

[289] The Hebrew reads תנין, 'large sea fish, serpent, dragon'.

[290] The Hebrew reads תנין.

dealt with all instances of *cetus* in the Vulgate.

In short, biblical monsters designated *belua* and *cetus* belong to Creation. In addition to this *cetus* also has a mythical aspect as a representative of the primeval Chaos[291].

Were the biblical concepts of *belua* and *cetus* of influence on Adomnán's sea monster? Although VC's sea monster shares some aspects with Jonah's monster and with Leviathan, there is no explicit evidence that Adomnán wanted to identify his beast with either of them[292]. There is no trace of the Underworld symbolism as found in the case of Jonah's sea monster, nor are the impressive mythological characteristics of Leviathan, like breathing fire, present. It seems to me that one should view VC's sea monster against the background of the miraculous inhabitants of the sea as they are described in *Genesis* and *Ecclesiasticus (Sir)*.

Non-canonical texts dealing with κῆτος hardly add new information. The *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* (2nd c. BC) gives a metaphor: rulers are compared with sea monsters swallowing fish (TJud 21:7). The *Book of Jubilees* (2nd c. BC; there is a Latin version, see O.S. Wintermute in Charlesworth, 1985, pp. 41-2) refers to the creation of the sea monsters in the midst of the depths of the waters on the 5th day; they are the first corporeal beings that God created (Jub 2:11). The *Lives of the Prophets* (1st c. AD; it was originally written in Greek, but it is also extant in Latin, see D.R.A. Hare in Charlesworth, 1985, p. 379[293]) mentions the sea monster casting Jonah forth (LivPro 10:2). In *Joseph and Aseneth* (1st c. BC — 2nd c. AD; there are Latin versions, see C. Burchard in Charlesworth, 1989, p. 179) mention is made of the great sea monster that has existed since eternity (Asen 12:11). This last example could refer to Leviathan, the primeval sea monster. (Another possibility — because of the Egyptian context — is the monster Apophis.) None of these texts throw further light upon the sea monster in VC.

Furthermore, there is a beast resembling a sea monster in Vis. IV.1 of

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[291] It is very likely that Jerome saw it as a symbol of moral evil parallel to the term *draco*, 'dragon' (see Kiessling, 1970, p. 169).

[292] There is one point on which I would like to dwell. In Book I of VC only two animals occur: the sea monster and a crane (I.48). The crane, arriving from Ireland and leaving again after resting and having been fed and taken care off, gives rise to an association with Jesus because of its stay during three days and nights. The *cetus*, with its symbolisms of Death and the Underworld/Hell in the gospel of Matthew (and later on of the Devil in Bestiaries) seems to be its opposite. The former arouses love and the latter fear (although not when someone's belief is strong enough). However, these thoughts are mere speculations of mine. It is not clear at all whether Adomnán had this symbolism in mind. Anderson (1961/91, p. xlix), for instance, suggests that this episode might refer to the length of the period that a stranger was allowed to stay on Iona.

[293] There is also an Irish text on the deaths of the prophets (from Rawl B 502 and Leabhar Breac; for a translation see Herbert, McNamara, 1989, p. 25) but this text does not refer to beasts.

Pastor Hermae, 'The Shepherd of Hermas' (130 — 150 AD, see Philipp Vielhauer, Georg Strecker in Schneemelcher, 1904/89, p. 547; there are Latin versions, see *ibid.*, p. 537; the text was known in Ireland as early as the first half of the sixth century as it was used in the penitential of Vinnian, see Breen, 1995, p. 109, n. 71). However, this monster moves over land, which is why it cannot be regarded as having affinities with the huge sea monster in VC (for more about this text and the monster, see 3.3.2.2.). In the *Acta Pauli*, 'Acts of Paul', (185 — 195 AD; see Wilhelm Schneemelcher and Rodolphe Kasser in Schneemelcher, 1904/89, p. 214; there are Latin versions; *ibid.*, p. 194) Jonah's sea monster is referred to as the deepest Hell (APl 8.3.29-30).

From this it can be concluded that there are no important texts among the non-canonical scriptures that could be adduced as sources for the enormous sea monster in VC.

Belua and *cetus* can be found in the sixth chapter of Book XII in **Isidore of Seville**'s *Etymologiae*[294]. Isidore enumerates different classes of sea-life near the end of this Book (XII.6.63), starting with *beluae*: the large sea beasts. He has described two of these kinds earlier, the *ballena*, 'the whale' (XII.6.6-7) and the *cetus* (XII.6.8).

The description of the whale shows some similarity with VC's monster. It is referred to as *belua* in XII.6.6 (1); XII.6.7 gives more aspects: it is a beast (*bestia*) of immense size (*inmensae magnitudinis*), which is the second aspect of VC's monster. The sixth aspect — causing a wash — could be compared with the whale's etymological[295] description: it throws up water. As was said above in chapter 1, the waves the whale produces are higher than those caused by other sea beasts.

Immediately after this description of the whale, the *cetus* is dealt with (XII.6.8). This beast is also referred to as *belua* (1) and shares the second aspect of VC's monster as well. It has a monstrous size (*inmanitas*); "*cete*" are enormous kinds of monster (*ingentia genera beluarum*). The third aspect is present too. Their bodies are as great as mountains (*aequalia montium corpora*). Isidore also refers to the *cetus* that received Jonah and compares its belly (*alvus*) with the Underworld/Hell because of its largeness, thereby quoting the prophet: "*Exaudivit me de ventre inferni*[296]", 'He has listened to me from the belly of the Underworld/Hell'.

What does this imply for Adomnán's text? The comparison with the mountain constitutes a striking similarity between this text and Isidore's description of the *cetus*. We may even go further back for this analogy, namely to a work by St Ambrose (bishop of Milan, 339 — 397), which

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[294] See O'Loughlin (1994b, pp. 47-8) for evidence of the presence of the *Etymologiae* on Iona, based on its use by Adomnán in his *De locis sanctis*.

[295] *Balaena* is etymologically connected with the Greek βάλλειν, 'to throw', by Isidore.

[296] This is not a literal quotation, cp. above.

may have been Isidore's source (André, 1986, p. 187, n. 339[297]). St
Ambrose mentions Jonah's sea monster *(cetus)* twice in his *Hexaemeron*, a
work on the six days of the Creation, but these instances (IV.4.13 and
V.11.35) have no direct relevance to the monster in VC. However, his
general description of sea monsters (V.10.28) is important. He draws a
contrast between human social life and the quiet, isolated life of sea
monsters *(cete)* who are far away *"ultra orbis terrarum terminos"*
(Schenkl, 1896, p. 162), 'beyond the bounds of the known world' (Savage,
1961/77, p. 182). Here, the image of mountains is mentioned:

"illic igitur ubi diffusum late mare omnem spectandi usum, utilitatis gratia nauigandi intercludat audaciam,	Therefore, in that place — where the wide open sea everywhere prevents every means of beholding it and every boldness to sail upon it for the sake of profit —
condere se feruntur cete,	there they say that the sea monsters hide themselves;
illa inmensa genera piscium, aequalia montibus corpora,	those immense kinds of fish (with) bodies equal in size to mountains
ut tradiderunt nobis qui uidere potuerunt" (Schenkl, 1896, p. 162).	as those who were able to see have related to us[298]

Somewhat further on (V.11.32) Ambrose describes the sea monsters *(cete)*
in the Atlantic Ocean. He again stresses their immensity and repeats the
image of mountains: when they surface, one could mistake them for
islands[299], for extremely high mountains with summits extending to the
sky. They live in the depths *(profundum)* of the Atlantic Ocean; sailors
who see them are likely to experience mortal fear. Some parallels to the
chapter from VC can be found here: the name *cetus* (1) and the size of the
beasts (2); the mountain image (3); the location in the deep (7) and the
surfacing (8), together with the mortal terror of people who see this kind
of beast rising above the water. Was this work of St Ambrose known to
Adomnán? The mountain image could, in any case, be borrowed from

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[297] According to André, this mountain formula is to be expected in connection
with *la baleine de Jonas*, 'Jonah's whale'. But André does not refer to examples
of this usage. On top of this, Ambrose does not give the image of mountains in
sections about Jonah's sea monster but in a general section about sea monsters as
well as in a further section about sea monsters in the Atlantic Ocean (see the
quotation and the paraphrase). Incidentally, André also transforms Jonah's sea
monster into a whale.

[298] My translation deviates from that of John Savage. In his translation, Ambrose
writes about two different kinds of beast: "the whale" and "a huge species of
fish" (Savage, 1961/77, p. 182). However, in my opinion this text deals with one
kind of animal whose designation — again — is not to be translated with 'whale'.

[299] Compare the narrative about the sea monster Jasconius in NBA, see below.

Isidore.

With respect to the location in deep water and the surfacing from the depths, it might be worth while to consider another source of Isidore: *Naturalis Historia*, 'Natural History', by Gaius Plinius Secundus (23 — 79 AD). In Book IX (Rackham, 1940/83, pp. 164-289), dealing with water beasts, Pliny relates about the greatest animals (which are the *ballaena* and the *pristis*, 'any sea monster; a whale, shark, saw-fish'; see IX.II.4 and IX.III.8) who live in the Indian Ocean. He furthermore describes the regular surfacing of monsters *(beluae)*. The monsters in the sea can most often be seen during the solstices. The storms that rage then in that part of the world "upturn the seas from their bottom". The waves force the monsters *(beluae)* in a crowd[300] from the depths *(profundum)* to the surface (IX.II.5; Rackham, 1940/83, pp. 166-7). Pliny also says that in quiet water in the Red Sea monsters *(beluae)* "grow to a huge motionless bulk" *(ad immobilem magnitudinem;* IX.II.6, Rackham, *ibid.).* Finally, Pliny mentions a great monster *(belua)* cast ashore at Cadiz which had 120 teeth (IX.IV.11). Just as in Isidore the causing of high waves is related to whales *(ballaenae)*, especially to the killer-whale *(orca;* IX.V.13-5).

Did Adomnán know this text[301]? There are some similarities: the designation *belua* (1); the large size (2); many teeth (4); living in the deep (7) alternated with occasionally surfacing (8). There are also differences: VC does not deal with the Indian Ocean, the Red Sea, or the area around Cadiz and the surfacing concerns only one monster instead of a multitude. Still, it does not seem impossible to me that this or a tradition of the same kind served as a source for Adomnán.

One final text has to be considered in this section. Although the comparison between sea monsters and mountains is found in works of Isidore and Ambrose, the specific phrase *'instar montis'* that Adomnán uses is found in another text, *Aeneid* II.15, where the comparison with a mountain is applied to the Trojan horse. Works by Virgil were known in

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[300] In *Verae Historiae*, 'True Histories', by Lucian of Samosata (*c.* 125 — 180) the main character finds himself on a sea voyage suddenly surrounded by wild beasts, many sea monsters and others (θηρία καὶ κήτη πολλὰ μὲν καὶ ἄλλα; Harmon, 1913/61, p. 284 — he translates: "a number of sea-monsters, whales"; *ibid.*, p. 285). The largest sea monster heads for the voyagers "with open mouth, dashing up the sea far in advance, foam-washed, showing teeth much larger than the emblems of Dionysus (...), and all sharp as caltrops and white as ivory" *(ibid.).* Although this description bears similarity to monsters in Irish texts no relation between them can be established. Only in the 15th century did Lucian's works become known in the West (Ziegler, Sontheimer, 1969, p. 776).

[301] According to Herren (1981, p. 131), Pliny's NH was known to the early Irish; he lists the work among the sources known to the Irish before *c.* 800 *(ibid.,* p. 138). O'Loughlin (1994b, pp. 44-6, 52) mentions this work as one of which it is doubtful that it was available to Adomnán on Iona, but adds: "For the present, it is perhaps better to consider it part of the library of Iona" *(ibid.,* p. 46). (It should be noted that the islands mentioned on p. 45 are not the Lipari but the Aeolian islands; Lipari and Vulcano are two of these.)

early Ireland, as Rijcklof Hofman (1988) argues[302]. It seems possible that for the description of the huge sea monster Adomnán borrowed this phrase about the Trojan horse from the *Aeneid* and combined this with sea monster characteristics that he may have taken from works by Pliny, Ambrose and Isidore. It should be noted, though, that a mountain is an obvious image with which to compare something huge.

Another (perhaps Hiberno-) Latin text which mentions an adventure with a sea monster has to be dealt with. It concerns *Vita prima Sanctae Geretrudis,* 'The Life of St Gertrude' (VG; edition by Krusch, 1888/1956, pp. 447-74). The text is older than VC (*c.* 670 according to Krusch, 1888/1956, p. 448, and Kenney, 1929/79, p. 504) so may come into consideration as a source of VC. The *Life* may have been written by an Irish person (Kenney, 1929/79, p. 505) in an Irish milieu.

Picard (1981, p. 97) compares this episode in VG with the one in VC. He wants to show that the continental version is more fantastical than VC. He even goes as far as to say that in the anecdote in VC no supernatural aspect is present. He sees the description of this miracle as evidence of the Irish preference for natural miracles and he connects this with the existence of "a genuine learning in *mirabilia* that existed in some Irish milieux" (*ibid.*).

I have some doubts about this characterization; first, on the assessment of the continental description as more fantastic and second, on this view of miracles. To start with the first point: in VG §5 (Krusch, 1888/1956, pp. 458-9) monks and sailors are sailing the sea. Suddenly something like a ship (*quasi navis*) of marvellous size appears in the distance; a storm rises (and the waves become high in version A; the earth moves in version B) and then a great, awful sea monster designated *belua* and *cetus*[303] turns up.

These three miraculous events constitute the fantastic description. It would appear to be feasible to assume a connection between the three. The 'ship' in the distance might refer to the sea monster[304], then diving under water and surfacing near the boat, causing high waves[305], which might give the impression of the rising of a storm. Comparing this with the

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[302] Gertrud Brüning (1917, pp. 241-2) lists some phrases from VC which she sees as influenced by Virgil's language, but she does not mention this one. (She quotes from the *Aeneid* and *Georgics*; see also 2.3.2.4.) It should be noted that O'Loughlin (1994b, p. 44) found no evidence of the presence of Virgil's *Aeneid* in Adomnán's *De locis sanctis.* It seems, however, that VC offers some clues that it was known to Adomnán.

[303] Translated as 'whale' by Picard (1981, p. 97).

[304] Compare how the *Physiologus* describes the *serra marina,* 'saw-fish': "*Et si uiderit naues nauigantes, imitatur eas, et exaltat alas suas, et contendit cum nauibus que nauigant (...)*' (Carmody, 1941, p. 105), 'and, when he sees the ships sailing, he imitates them and raises his wings and strives with the ships as they sail' (Curley, 1979, p. 6). (For more about the *Physiologus,* see below.)

[305] The movement of the earth in version B is more difficult to explain.

description in VC in which a sea monster which causes high waves also turns up, I do not think that the one event is that much more fantastic than the other.

Second, the concept of 'natural' miracles is a contradiction in terms. If an event is natural then it cannot be classified as a miracle. There has to be some extraordinary or supernatural aspect to make an event miraculous. Something remarkable has to happen: only then will people acknowledge an event as a miracle.

The supernatural aspect in these two versions is — apart from the numinous appearance of the monster — present in the way in which the danger is overcome. In the older version a monk invokes St Gertrude thrice[306]; in the later one a monk blesses both sea and beast. There are several similarities and differences between the two beasts: they are called *cetus* and *belua* (1); they are large (2); one seems to be compared with a ship, the other is compared with a mountain (3); in Gertrude's *Life* the passengers only see a part of the beast's back; in VC the attention is focused on the monster's mouth with its many teeth (4, 5); they cause high waves (6); they live in the deep: in VG the beast goes towards the abyss, the deep (*abyssus*); in VC it plunges beneath the waves (*fluctus*; 7); and in both tales the monsters surface (8). There are quite a few similarities, but the differences are too significant for Gertrude's *Life* to be considered as a source for VC.

There are several variant versions of the *Life of Columba* in **Hiberno-Latin**[307]. James Kenney (1929/79, pp. 428-9, 433-42) lists them, but only two of them fall within this study's scope. First, there is the *Life of Columba* by Pseudo-Cummian[308] (edition: Brüning, 1917, pp. 293-304; translation: Metcalfe, 1895, pp. 29-47). Pseudo-Cummian's *Life* is dated to the 12th century by Michael Lapidge and Richard Sharpe (1985, p. 337) but later Sharpe (1991, p. 392) dates it to the 9th century. Second, the abridged version of Columba's *Life* (edition: Canisius, 1604, pp. 559-621) is also dated to the 9th century by Sharpe (1991, p. 392). Jean-Michel Picard (conversation, UCD, 11-6-1993) has kindly informed me that this *Life* depends entirely on the Schaffhausen manuscript and it can therefore be left aside here.

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[306] The invocation of a female saint who is not present during a threat posed by a sea monster also occurs in the appendix to the *Life of Brigit* (see above, 1.3.2).

[307] In order to find sources and variant versions in Hiberno-Latin texts I consulted the Database of Medieval Latin from Celtic Sources (November 1992 to February 1993).

[308] The real Cuimíne *Ailbe*, 'Cumméne the White', was abbot of Iona from 657 to 669 (Anderson, 1961/91, p. lxiii). Kenney (1929/79, pp. 428-9) dates the text to 642 — 669 and considers it as one of Adomnán's sources. He disputes Brüning's view (1917, pp. 260-72) that the text is an abridgement of Adomnán's VC. However, later studies support Brüning's theory (see Anderson, 1961/91, pp. lxiii-lxv) and the text is now generally referred to as 'Pseudo-Cummian'. The book on Columba which was one of Adomnán's sources is considered lost.

In Pseudo-Cummian's *Life* there is no mention of the episode about the sea monster. VC itself gives a similar, but obviously different monster. In NBA a few interesting monsters occur which deserve some attention, and finally, there are two references of minor importance.

The third monster in VC (II.27) is also a water monster called *bilua* (1). However, it lives in a river instead of the sea (although the event may have been localised at the place where the river runs into the sea[309]). The sea monster has many teeth[310] (5); the river monster uses its teeth: it bites a person to death and threatens another victim. The two monsters dwell in the deep (*profundum*; 7) and in the episodes in VC they surface (8) and open their mouths (4). The river monster roars and is very fast, but the text does not mention its largeness. These two water monsters from VC have thus a few things in common, but they are clearly different from each other.

In NBA there are references to *belua* in §§15, 16 and 27 and to *cetus* in §16. There are three water monsters involved here and they have already been introduced in chapter 1 (see 1.3.2): Jasconius; the ocean monster that attacks Brendan and his brothers, and the water beast that defends them. I will now return to them to see what features they share with the enormous sea monster.

First, the sea monster Jasconius is referred to as *belua* in §§15 and 27 (1). Jasconius is large (2) as it is called *inmanissima bestia* (§15), which means 'a beast very monstrous in size (enormous, immense, huge, vast) or in character (frightful, inhuman, fierce, savage, wild)'. Moreover, it is mistaken for an island (§10), which also shows how enormous the beast is. This idea of an island could be compared with the mountain image (3) in VC (cp. also St Ambrose's *Hexaemeron* V.11.32, summarised above). There is no reference to either Jasconius's mouth (4) or teeth (5), but the text mentions that 'the island begins to move like a wave' (§10), and it goes without saying that when such a huge beast swims away waves are created (6). There is no mention of the deep (7), but the beast surfaces (8) regularly (once a year at Easter) when it is used as an island by the voyagers, after the first shock of their having mistaken the sea monster for an island.

Before drawing any conclusions about the comparison between this beast and the one in VC I devote further attention to two connected aspects: the island image and the symbolical meaning of the sojourn on Jasconius's back at the Easter Vigil. Here the symbolisms of Jonah's sea monster, Leviathan, the Deep, Hell and the Underworld come together, as I hope to show now.

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[309] See below, 2.3.2.3.

[310] In VC the teeth of a *belua* are also mentioned in II.39: a sword has been decorated with monster's teeth (*beluinis dentibus*), which is rendered in the translation as: "with shaped pieces of ivory" (Anderson, 1961/91 p. 157). For more about an Irish custom of decorating sword-hilts with teeth of beasts from the sea, see Sharpe (1995, p. 339, n. 314).

The motif of sailors mistaking a sea beast for an island is widespread[311], but I will deal here only with its Christian use as NBA is a text deeply devoted to liturgical practice and ecclesiastical ideals. The symbolical meaning of the island motif combined with the celebration of the Easter Vigil[312] can be understood when read against the background of an entry in the late antique *Physiologus* (edition of the Latin version Y from the 4th or 5th century: Carmody, 1941, (see p. 98); translation: Curley, 1979), a tract on natural history to which moralistic Christian lessons are added. This work was very popular in the Middle Ages. Its Greek original may have been composed in Alexandria *c.* 200 AD (Curley, 1979, pp. xvi, xix). Its Latin translation was known in the early sixth century and possibly in circulation in the mid-fourth century (*ibid.*, p. xxi). First I will summarise the island episode in NBA before giving the relevant section from the *Physiologus*.

St Brendan and his monks arrive on a rocky island with a few trees[313] but no grass or sand on it. The brothers go ashore, whereas Brendan stays aboard. After the Vigil the monks begin to prepare meat and fish[314]. When the pot above the fire starts to boil the island suddenly begins to undulate. The brothers flee into the boat as fast as they can and they watch the island disappear into the distance with pot and fire on it. Brendan admonishes them not to be afraid. This mystery was revealed to him by God in a nocturnal vision:

"Insula non est, ubi fuimus,
sed piscis,
prior omnium natancium in oceano.

Querit semper ut suam caudam
simul iungat capiti,
et non potest pre longitudine.
Qui habet nomen Jasconius"
(Selmer, 1959/89, p. 21)

"Where we were was not an island,
but a fish —
the foremost of all that swim in the ocean.

He is always trying to bring his
tail to meet his head,
but he cannot because of his length.
His name is Jasconius"
(O'Meara, 1976/85, p. 19).

[311] See, for instance, Runeberg (1902).

[312] Ludwig Bieler (1946, pp. 139-40) observes that a manuscript of the *Vita Brendani* (with its derivatives) reads Casconius instead of Jasconius. He is of the opinion that the former name is more significant than the latter (Jasconius would be "a platitude"; *ibid.*, p. 139) and raises the possibility that Casconius might be the original name of the monster. Both names are 'Latinisations': *iasc* is 'fish' in Old Irish and *cásc* 'Easter'. Considering the fact that the versions of *Vita Brendani* are probably later than NBA (cp. note 93) I would like to suggest another development: because of the Easter context a scribe of the *Vita Brendani* changed the name of Jasconius into Casconius. The designation *iasc* is no platitude as it is symbolically connected with Jonah's *piscis/cetus*.

[313] John J. O'Meara (1976/85, p. 18) translates *silva rara* by 'a few pieces of driftwood'.

[314] O'Meara (1976/85, p. 18) translates *pisces* by 'flesh'.

It is on this 'island' that they are celebrating the Easter Vigil during the seven years that their voyage will take.

The comparison between a sea monster and an island given by the *Physiologus* reads as follows:

"PHISIOLOGUS autem dixit	"Physiologus spoke
de ceto quoddam,	of a certain sea-monster[315]
quod est in mari,	in the sea
nomine aspidoceleon uocatur,	called the aspidoceleon[316]
magnum nimis,	that is exceedingly large
simile insule,	like an island,
et plus quam harena grauis,	heavier than sand,
figuram habens diabuli.	and is a figure of the devil.
Ignorantes autem naute,	Ignorant sailors
alligant ad eum naues	tie their ships to the beast
sicut ad insulam,	as to an island
et anchoras et palos nauis configunt	and plant their anchors and stakes
in eo;	in it.
et accendunt super eum ignem	They light their cooking fires on
ad coquendum sibi aliquid;	him[317]
si autem excaluerit cetus,	but, when he feels the heat,
urinat,	he urinates
descendens in profundum,	and plunges into the depths,
et demergit omnes naues.	sinking all the ships.
— Sic et tu, o homo,	You also, O man,
si suspendas te et aligas teipsum	if you fix and bind yourself
in spe diabuli,	to the hope of the devil,
demergit te secum simul	he will plunge you along with him-
in gehennam ignis"	self into hell-fire"
(Carmody, 1941, p. 125)	(Curley, 1979, pp. 45-6).

Here, the depth of the sea (*profundum*) symbolically refers to Hell and the sea monster symbolises the Devil.

There is an important difference between the two descriptions: Jasconius does not dive into the depths. This should be seen against the background of the Easter symbolism. This liturgical feast celebrates Jesus Christ's descent into the Underworld and his victory over Death. As could be read above, this stay of Jesus in the heart of the earth is in the NT compared with Jonah's stay in the sea monster. Therefore, Brendan's brothers keeping the Easter Vigil on a beast symbolising the Under-world/Death (Mt 12:40) or the Devil (the *Physiologus*) is an apt symbol for the victory over Death/Hell/the Devil. The moralistic warning of the

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[315] Curley (1979, p. 45) translates 'whale'.
[316] This may mean 'asp-tortoise', deriving from the Greek ἀσπίς,' asp', and χελώνη, 'tortoise' (see also Curley, 1979, p. 83).
[317] Curley (1979, p. 45) translates 'on the whale'.

Physiologus is not given in NBA: here the message is conveyed in a subtle way that the danger of Death/Hell/the Devil is conquered.

The Easter context of NBA §10 shows how Jasconius can be seen against the background of Jonah's monster/the Underworld and the *Physiologus* offers a symbolism of the Devil as sea monster, but there is also a relation between Jasconius and Leviathan. Jasconius is called the *prior*, 'first, superior, the most important one', of all that swim in the ocean and its attempts to form a circle are referred to in §10. St Brendan draws the attention of the brothers to the fact that this *inmanissima bestia* is subject to God and therefore presents no danger to them (§15). Finally, in the episode about the clear sea (see above, 1.3.2) Jasconius is called *omnium bestiarum maris devorator et magister*, 'the devourer and master of all the beasts of the sea', and the image of the circle, the abode in the deep (*profundum*) and the surfacing is here given by the beasts seen in the clear sea (§21; cp. above, 1.3.2).

As could be read above (1.3.2) Leviathan is the sea monster *par excellence* in the Bible, which is why this could be connected with the aspects of Jasconius being the foremost/first and the devourer and master of all water beasts. As was pointed out in 1.3.2, Leviathan is called the chief among the fish in the Middle Irish homily XVI, which is another example of this beast being the foremost/first. This may go back to the Greek translation of the final verse that describes Leviathan in the *Book of Job*: the Latin text (Iob 41:25) says, like the Hebrew text (Job 41:26), that Leviathan is king over all the children of pride; the LXX (Iob 41:26) makes him king over all who are in the waters. This information may have come either directly to Ireland and/or via another source, such as for instance the *Commentary on the Book of Job* by Julian of Eclanum (edition: De Coninck, d'Hont, 1977a, see p. 108), who translates the phrase from the LXX into Latin. I also referred to the tradition of how Leviathan has been subdued by God but kept alive since the cosmological combat. In *IV Ezra* 6:49-52, for instance, it is said that Leviathan and Behemoth were kept *alive* on the fifth day when the other beasts in water and air were *created*. This could be compared with Brendan's remark about the subjection of Jasconius. Finally, the serpent that bites in its own tail is called the οὐροβόρος δράκων (for a survey of this idea in the literature of many cultures, see Stricker, 1953), an image that has also been connected with Leviathan (*ibid.*, p. 16). The idea of a serpent or dragon encircling the world can be traced back to some old Semitic world views in which the earth is surrounded by the ocean. The ocean can be conceived of as a serpent which has its tail in its mouth; or this serpent lies in the encircling ocean (Wensinck, 1916, pp. 61-2; Wensinck also refers to a Jewish tradition in which the world lies on the fins of Leviathan; *ibid.*, p. 62). The idea of Leviathan forming a circle in the sea was also known in Ireland, as can be read in the gloss mentioned above in Codex Palatinus Latinus 68 on *Psalm* 73:14 and in TBDD (for both quotations, see 1.3.2). The author of NBA, however, linked the idea of a beast forming a circle with the sea monster Jasconius and showed at the same time to be aware of the name of the mythological monster Leviathan as the name is used in

NBA §25 to signify the Devil (dwelling in the centre of a mountain[318]).

As is clear now, the description of Jasconius is deeply embedded in a complex symbolical system. Even though Jasconius shares some aspects (1, 2, 6, 8) with the huge sea monster in VC, it is obvious that the latter cannot be considered its equal in a mythological sense. The monster from VC is one of the miraculous monstrous inhabitants of the waters, but there is no concrete connection with Jasconius and its counterparts Leviathan and Jonah's sea monster.

The second *belua* appears when Brendan and his brothers are sailing the ocean (NBA §16[319]). Suddenly an immense beast (*bestia immense magnitudinis*) rapidly approaches, spouting foam from its nostrils. It looks as if it wants to devour the voyagers. The brothers call upon the Lord, referring to the monster as *belua*. St Brendan tries to comfort them: God, their defender, will deliver them from the mouth of the beast. When it is near the boat the monster causes extraordinarily high waves. The fear of the brothers increases; Brendan prays to God to deliver them, as God delivered David from the hands of Goliath and Jonah from the belly of the great sea monster (*cetus*). Then another enormous monster (*ingens belua*) arrives from the West. This is the third enormous sea monster playing a role in NBA. This one spits fire and attacks the other beast. St Brendan admonishes the brothers to watch how these beasts obey their Creator. The first beast is cut into three pieces and the second one returns to where it came from.

The first sea monster seems to me to be a variant version of the beast in VC. It is referred to as *belua* (1); it is enormously large (2); it probably opens its mouth (4: I base this upon the brothers' fear of being devoured; furthermore, Brendan refers to the monster's mouth in his encouragement of the brothers). It causes high waves (6) and it shows up at the surface of the ocean (8). The spouting of water is a peculiarity of its own and the speed it shares with the river monster in VC. The second monster is different: it emits fire and it is helpful to the voyagers. Brendan refers to the beasts as creatures obedient to their Creator. As described above, the sea monster in VC should also be considered as a miraculous inhabitant of the sea, and it is 'obedient' when Baíthéne — undaunted like Brendan — blesses it.

Sea monsters are mentioned in the poem about the sea in the *Hisperica Famina* (see 1.3.2). These monsters are called *c[o]etia* (1); they are enormous (*inormia*; 2); the idea of open mouths (4) is given by them swallowing sealife, salt water and fish and they sweep the waters ('the Neptunian blue') with their scaly heads (6?). The sea monster of VC seems to be one of a kind with these beasts, but the similarities between the texts are not specific enough to connect them in a direct way.

In *De mirabilibus Sacrae Scripturae*, 'About the miracles of the Sacred Scripture', (by Augustinus Hibernicus, 655; see Lapidge and Sharpe, 1985,

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[318] For more about this, see 3.3.2.5.
[319] See also 1.3.2 about this episode.

p. 79) a *cetus* is mentioned; it is the sea monster that swallowed the prophet Jonah (Migne, 1864, col. 2181, §17[320]). As is now clear, this beast is similar to VC's monster but has no direct relation with it.

In conclusion: some of the monsters described in Hiberno-Latin texts share characteristics with VC's sea monster, but none of them can be considered to have been a source. One of them — the sea monster that threatens to devour St Brendan and the brothers at sea — can be seen as a variant version, albeit in a wide sense. The way in which the monster is conquered differs very much from that in VC. Leviathan, Jonah's sea monster and perhaps also the sea monster in the *Physiologus* were shown to be connected with Jasconius from NBA, but no direct relation with VC's sea monster can be established.

Most of the relevant sea monsters occurring in **Old and Middle Irish texts** have already been described in 1.3.2. I can, therefore, be brief in comparing them with the beast from VC. In the Middle Irish version of Columba's *Life* — *Betha Coluim Chille*, 'The Life of Colum Cille' (BCC; edition and translation: Herbert, 1988, pp. 218-69; dated to not much later than 1169; *ibid.*, p. 193), — no parallel to the episode about the sea monster is present.

The sea beasts whose names start with *muir-* share some of the characteristics of the sea monster of VC. The *muirdris* in EFmL is large (2), causes high waves (6), and lives in the deep (7). The *muirbech* from AnS is large (2) and a wave rises after it (6). The *muiriasc* from the glosses on ACC and the *dindsenchas* is large (2), opens its mouth to spew (4) and probably surfaces while doing that[321] (8). The *muirselche* from TE and the *dindsenchas* may be large (2) and lives in the deep (7). Obviously, these similarities are only superficial, which is why these beasts can only be seen as variant versions in a very wide sense.

The sea beast from TB §74[322], together with the sucking beasts from TTA and the beast from AA, belongs to a different complex. These sea beasts cause the tides, and they also show only superficial similarity. These beasts, of course, create waves (6) as they cause ebb and flood. Furthermore, the beast from AA is probably large (2); it opens its mouth when it

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[320] There is a more recent, but unpublished, edition and translation of the text: G. McGinty, The Treatise *De Mirabilibus Sacrae Scripturae*, Ph. D. diss., University College Dublin, 1971.

[321] This is only the case in the glosses; in the *dindsenchas* the beast is cast ashore.

[322] TB §57 mentions a horned beast (*míl*) washed ashore on the eve of Christ's nativity. The people who see it first suppose that it is a mountain or a high island. Therefore, here the comparison with a mountain (and an island) also occurs. However, the beast shows no sign of presenting a danger. For this reason it is outside the scope of this study. The same is true of large beasts washed ashore and in the possession of remarkable teeth which are mentioned in the *Annals* (see, for instance, the *Annals of Clonmacnoise* 744, and the margins of the *Annals of Ulster* 752). (For the edition and translation of the *Annals of Clonmacnoise*, see Murphy, 1896.)

attacks the sun (4), lives in the depths (7), and will surface during its battle with the sun (8). These texts are later than VC and should be categorised as variant versions in a wide sense.

The beast in ICMD §23 is large (2), opens its mouth (4), and lives at the bottom of the sea (7) but, as observed above, it is not certain whether this beast should be categorised as a water monster. The beasts in the fiery sea in ICUC §66 are relevant for the comparison with the last kind of monster in VC (see 2.3.2.5) and will be dealt with in that context. They share no important characteristics with the sea monster in VC.

The beast from *pAS* is large (2) and opens its mouth (4). This is all it shares with the monster central here. The two sea monsters in ApBB §6 should be seen as a variant version of NBA §16 (see above, 1.3.2) and can be left aside here.

In sum, there is no evidence of a source in Irish that has been used for the description of this sea monster. The variant versions of the enormous sea monster in Old and Middle Irish texts do not throw more light upon the beast; they are not closely related to it.

I will now draw some conclusions from this search for sources and variant versions of the enormous sea monster. This beast can be seen as one of the miraculous creatures of the sea, as found in general descriptions in canonical and non-canonical scripture. Although it shares some aspects with sea monsters which have a symbolical significance — like Leviathan, Jonah's sea monster, and Jasconius — there are no signs that Adomnán wanted the readers to identify the beast described in his text with one of those. The comparison of a sea monster with a mountain may have been taken over from Isidore's *Etymologiae*, or from his source, St Ambrose's *Hexaemeron*. The phrase '*instar montis*' might come from Virgil's *Aeneid* where it is applied to the Trojan horse. The tradition that large sea monsters live in the deep and that they regularly surface can be read in the *Hexaemeron* too and, moreover, in Pliny's NH. A miracle similar to the one in VC was found in VG, but it was concluded that this text was not a source as the descriptions differ too much. Other sea monsters from Hiberno-Latin and Old and Middle Irish texts were shown to be variant versions in a wide sense. It seems, therefore, that Adomnán was inspired by texts like the *Aeneid*, NH, the *Hexaemeron* and the *Etymologiae* which describe similar monsters, especially concerning the aspect of the comparison with a mountain and the motif of regular surfacing from the deep. But he did not follow one particular source for this episode in VC: he used his sources creatively. The huge sea monster from VC is, therefore, a monster of the integrated kind.

2.3.2.2 The monstrous wild boar

The second monster is designated *aper* and *ferus*. *Aper* occurs only once in

the **Vulgate**: in Ps 79:14 a wild boar from the forest (*aper de silva*[323]) has laid waste the vineyard. This would give two parallels with the wild boar from VC (its name: 1; the forest: 3), but the wild boar is a metaphor (for Israel's enemy and the vineyard for Israel). In the **non-canonical texts** (*IV Ezra* 15:30) a metaphor of the same kind (wild boars of the forest devastating land with their teeth) is found, with which all references to *aper* have been dealt with. *Ferus* occurs more often, but it is used in general for something wild or a wild beast. Therefore, I conclude that both canonical and non-canonical scripture did not influence the description of this monster.

Isidore (*Etymologiae* XII.1.27) relates that *aper* owes its name to its ferocity: *a feritate* and in this phrase the *p* replaced the *f*. He categorises the wild boar, incidentally, among the tame animals and the beasts of burden (XII.1 *De pecoribus et iumentis*, §§27 and 61) and not among the wild beasts (XII.2 *De bestiis*), the *bestiae* and *ferae* (XII.2.1-2). It is obvious that Isidore's work is also irrelevant to a better understanding of the wild boar in VC.

There is, however, another Latin text that describes monstrous boars: the *Metamorphoses* by Ovid (Publius Ovidius Naso; 43 BC — 18 AD). The first wild boar is described in Book VIII.267-424 in the story about Meleager and Atalanta (edition and translation: Miller, 1916/71, see pp. 424-37). The beast is sent as a divine punishment by the Goddess Diana. It is elaborately described (VIII.282-98). I mention a few of its characteristics: its eyes glow with blood and fire; it is foaming; its tusks are as large as those of Indian elephants and lightning flashes from its mouth. Herbage shrivels under its breath and it tramples down crops. This wild boar shares several aspects with the wild boar from VC. It is called *aper*, *ferus* (and *sus*; 1). It is monstrous in size (*inmanis*, VIII.422) being as large as a certain type of bull (VIII.282-3; 2). It is found in a dense forest (*silva frequens trabibus*, VIII.329; 3). The fourth aspect is different: hounds are set loose, but this wild boar chases away the hounds (VIII.343-4). Finally, this wild boar attacks — albeit not a man alone, but a whole group of hunters (5). A God (Phoebus, VIII.350) is called upon, but the man who does so does not conquer the beast. A Goddess (Diana, VIII.394-5) is challenged, and the man who does this is killed by the wild boar. This encounter is a battle fought with weapons: the beast is hit by Atalanta's arrow and killed by Meleager's spears. The wild boar faces a crowd of hunters and hounds, and dies by the thrust of spears. On the whole, this lengthy tale differs considerably from the short chapter about Columba.

The second wild boar is central to the fourth task of Hercules, who had to bring the Erymanthian wild boar to Eurystheus alive. There is only a short reference to this in *Metamorphoses* IX.192: Hercules calls out: "Was it for this that the centaurs could not prevail against me, nor the boar

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[323] The wild boar is mentioned in parallel with either a solitary wild animal (*singularis ferus*, PsG) or all beasts of the field (*omnes bestiae agri*, PsH).

(*aper*) that wasted Arcady?" (Miller, 1916/68, pp. 16-7). There is also a wild boar (*aper*) mentioned that kills Adonis in X.710-6. It is called *aper* (1), is found in a wood (*silva*; 3), is traced by hounds (4) and attacks (5). But this beast does not seem to have an extraordinary or supernatural aspect in this text. Moreover, as the boar kills Adonis this is the opposite of what happens in VC.

I return to Hercules, for this is an example of a single man facing a wild, devastating boar. The works of Hercules are also mentioned in the *Aeneid*. In *Aeneid* VIII.287-302 Hercules's great deeds are praised, but the conquest of the Erymanthian boar is not among them. In Book VI.802-3 it is said that Hercules gave peace to the Erymanthian wood (*nemus*); again the wild boar is not explicitly mentioned. Virgil's *Aeneid* could very well have been one of Adomnán's sources, but this specific instance gives too little information to connect it with the wild boar in VC.

It is also worth while looking at the commentaries on Virgil's works that were in use in early Ireland (Hofman, 1988, pp. 191-2), for instance the commentary of Servius (*c.* 360/370 — *c.* 430) on Virgil's *Aeneid*. However, even this text does not tell us much: the commentary on *Aeneid* VI.802 explains the Erymanthus as a mountain in Arcadia, 'where the very ferocious wild boar lived' (*aper ferocissimus*; edition: Thilo, Hagen, 1880-1902/1961, II, p. 113). The commentary on *Aeneid* VIII.299 only says that Hercules conquered the Erymanthian boar (*aper Erymanthius*; *ibid.*, p. 241).

Surveying this material, I conclude that it is likely that Adomnán knew about heroes conquering wild boars, but that he probably did not follow one of these Latin texts as a model. The comparison with these texts brings an important difference to light: the absence of weapons and the use of sacred gestures and words in the encounter with the wild boar. A heroic motif seems to have been adapted for hagiography.

In **Hiberno-Latin texts** *aper* is generally used to refer to an ordinary wild boar[324]. There are many instances in hagiography[325] of the motif in

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[324] The glosses on the *Psalms* in Codex Palatinus Latinus 68 also take the wild boar from Ps 79:14 as a metaphor and they give names as suggestions for the identity of the enemy thus symbolised (McNamara, 1986, p. 173).

[325] An example is the wild boar (*aper ferus singularis et silvestris*) which ends up in Brigit's herd of pigs (in the 7th-century *Vita Sanctae Brigidae virginis* by Cogitosus; Migne, 1849b, col. 782). Picard (1981, p. 98) refers to this episode as a parallel of the *aper* in VC: according to him it concerns the same kind of animal. There is, however, a difference. Brigit's wild boar has no extraordinary or supernatural aspect, which is why this episode does not come into consideration as variant version in this study. Picard mentions more variant versions: first, the *Life of Caesarius of Arles* (I.48; Krusch, 1896/1977, pp. 475-6), but this *Life* deals with ordinary wild boars. Second, the *Life of Aemilianus* by Gregory of Tours (XII.2; Krusch, 1885/1969, pp. 262-3); here an enormous wild boar (*sus, aper*) escapes into a saint's cell. Therefore, although this beast has an extraordinary aspect, I cannot view it as a variant version because danger is absent. Nobody

which the animal appears to be a wild beast which is tamed by a saint. However, ordinary wild beasts fall outside this study's scope[326]. Only in the later Latin version of VC is a close parallel to be found: in the eulogy after Columba's death and burial in the *Life of Columba* by Pseudo-Cummian (§25; Brüning, 1917, p. 303; Metcalfe, 1895, p. 46) many miracles are mentioned and one of them is Columba's encounter with the enormous wild boar. The description uses nearly the same words as Adomnán, although it is much shorter. The beast is called *aper* (1) and it is also *mirae magnitudinis* (2). The incident happens in a wood (*silva*) — neither is Skye nor is the density of the wood mentioned (3). The persecution by hunting dogs (4) can be found in this version as well. Finally, there is an encounter between the beast and the saint (5) in this text too. The gestures and words of the holy man are less extensive, though. Columba only raises his hand, whereas Adomnán has him also invoking God's name and praying intently. The formula spoken by the saint is a bit shorter too: "*Vlterius,*" inquit, "*hinc noli procedere; in loco eodem morere*" (Brüning, 1917, p. 303), 'Come no further; die where thou art' (Metcalfe, 1895, p. 46). The end of the little story is quickly told: 'and it died' (*ibid.*).

There is thus one variant version of VC II.26 in Hiberno-Latin texts: the episode in Pseudo-Cummian's *Life*. This version does not add anything: it is only a summary of the miracle described in VC.

In **Old and Middle Irish texts** the following monstrous wild boars[327] can be found. It should be noted that there is no parallel to this episode in BCC. In CMM §§34-7[328] magic pigs (*mucca gentliuchta*) lay waste the land. Wherever they go, the ground becomes barren for seven years. Nothing is said about their size. They come from the cave of Crúachain, which is Ireland's gate to Hell (according to the text). As these beasts differ in every aspect from the wild boar in VC, they cannot be connected with the latter.

The same is true about the fiery, red, fat animals (*míla*) like pigs (*mucca*) in ICMD §10. They live on a large island full of trees bearing golden apples. The pigs are under the trees (3?) during the day; at night they retreat to underground caverns. Obviously, this description is very different from the one in VC.

The Old Irish *Triads of Ireland* (Meyer, 1906b, pp. 30-1; see also

is threatened by the wild boar. Finally, there is a wild boar in the *Life of Columbanus* (II.22; Krusch, 1902/77, pp. 142-3), but of this beast Picard already says that it probably belongs to a different category: it is a transformation of the Devil. There is no physical danger involved, which is what is needed to be a variant version of Columba's episode. In sum, the variant versions that Picard brings up are not relevant to this study.

[326] A word-search for *ferus* did not result in relevant material: together occurring with *aper* it only referred to ordinary wild boars.

[327] An Irish gloss on Ps 79:14 explains how the wild boar (*torc*) destroys the vine: it roots it up from below (Stokes, Strachan, 1901-3/75, I, p. 345).

[328] A variant version can be found in the *dindšenchas*, see Stokes (1894, p. 470).

Nagy, 1985, p. 56) describes the three wonders of Glenn Dalláin: the first involves a wild boar[329] (*torc*). Finn mac Cumaill could not do anything against the wild boar of Druim Leithe, even though he used horses and hounds (mentioned in a quatrain) to hunt the beast. The wild boar is apparently dangerous as Finn hunts it and it is extraordinary as Finn is incapable of conquering it. It shares the following aspects with the wild boar in VC: it is called *torc*, which is the Irish equivalent of *aper* (1), and is pursued by hounds (4). The other characteristics differ: it is killed by a peasant on a plain (Mag Lí). Obviously, it can be seen as a variant version only in a very wide sense.

There are more texts about wild boars encountered by Finn. In *Macgnímartha Finn*, 'The Boyhood Deeds of Finn' (MF; edition: Meyer, 1881-83; translation: Nagy, 1985, pp. 209-18; dated to the 12th century; *ibid.*, p. 7), the boy Finn encounters a devastating wild pig (*mucc*[330]). In MF §15 the daughter (Cruithne) of a chief smith (Lóchán) falls in love with Finn. The smith gives Finn his daughter, two spears and — at his departure — a warning about a wild pig. Finn is not to go on the road where the pig (*mucc*) called Béo ('Alive') is. This beast had devastated the midlands of Munster. However, Finn does go on the road and is attacked by the pig. He kills the beast by hurling one of his spears through it and gives its head to the smith in payment for the daughter. The mountain is called after the pig (*Slíab Muicce*).

The only point of comparison with VC's wild boar is the attack (5). All the other aspects differ. This story is, therefore, too different to be considered a variant version.

There are two other pigs mentioned in this text: in MF §24 Finn sees a man coming from a *síd* carrying a *mucc* called *slainsi*, translated as 'cooked [?[331]]' by Nagy (1985, p. 216). Nagy (*ibid.*, p. 294, n. 11) quotes Thomas O'Rahilly who suggests that *slainsi* is a corruption for *sláing(a)i*. The *mucc slánga* occurs in other Fenian texts too. Nagy (*ibid.*, p. 284, n. 54) wonders whether Béo belongs to this class of pigs on the basis of its name: "Does the name imply a beneficent, revivifying pig—at least when served as food—like the perilous yet therapeutic mucc slánga, which was regularly hunted by the fían (...)?". The motif of a man carrying a pig occurs in other texts also, but although it is interesting I will not deal with it as it is not related to the motif central here. Finally, MF §3, a poem about the battle of Cnucha, also mentions a pig: a certain Banb Sinna

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[329] The second is the Beast of Leittir Dallán (see above, n. 166); the third is the Ox of Dil.

[330] It is hard to say whether this beast has a supernatural aspect, because the text does not give explicit evidence of that. But because of the function of the episode in the tale (see Nagy, 1985, pp. 147-50), the mention of the wild pig's name, which might indicate its peculiarity, and the fact that wild boars — both supernatural and natural — are often found in texts connected with Finn, I will treat this beast as one of the monstrous wild boars (see also Nagy, 1985, p. 250).

[331] Józsi Nagy (letter, 25-1-1996) kindly informs me that he bases this translation upon the context in which the word occurs.

is mentioned who fell on account of the pig (*mucc*) from Temair Lúachra. MF does not give more information, but the same tradition is found in the prose text about this battle. *Fotha Catha Cnucha*, 'The Reason for the Battle of Cnucha' (edition: Best, Bergin, 1929, pp. 101-3; translation: Nagy, 1985, 218-21; dated to the 12th-13th century; *ibid.*, p. 304, n. 29), gives a little more information. It refers to "the slaying of the mucc slánga and Banb Sinna, son of Mael Enaig" and then the quatrain about these two from MF §3 is quoted with some minor variations (*ibid.*, p. 221). This would mean that all three pigs might be called *mucc slánga*, if Nagy is right. Because there is so little information about the pig of Temair Lúachra, there is no ground for comparison with the wild boar from VC.

There is another story about a *mucc slánga* which gives more information about this mysterious beast and which is, moreover, relevant in comparison with VC. It is found in AnS (O'Grady, 1892, I, pp. 143-5; II, pp. 157-60). There is a swine (*mucc*) on *Druim Náir*, 'Nár's Ridge, "against which both hounds and men are powerless" (*ibid.*, II, pp. 157-8). Some of the *fiana* are going to hunt this wild pig. It is an extraordinary animal: it has nine tusks in each jaw. The beast screams when it sees the large hounds and hunters, while they experience horror and fear in the beast's presence. It is killed by a spear-thrust and while it lies dead its large size is commented upon. Furthermore, it is said to be the *mucc slánga*[332]. At the end of the story the pig is given to the king of Ireland who distributes it among the men of Ireland[333].

"Ocus do roinn rí Eirenn in mhuc dona .u. cathaib fichet bátar fir Eirenn i n-Uisnech	"Then the king of Ireland divided the pig among the twenty-five battalions of the men of Ireland who were there at Uisnech,
gur'bhat subaigh sobrónaigh uili iat.	and they were all happy and cheerful as a result.
Ocus ba hí sin Muc Slángha déidhenach do roinned idir feruibh Eirenn"	That was the last mucc slánga that was ever divided among the men of Ireland"
(Stokes, Windisch, 1900, p. 63)	(Nagy, 1985, p. 56).

Comparing this story with the episode in VC, the following can be said: the wild pig (*mucc*) is huge (2); it lives on a ridge, or in a mountain area; it is pursued by hounds (4) and attacks (5). The way it is killed differs from VC. Moreover, it is encountered by a group of men and their dogs instead of by one man alone, but in a wide sense one could say that

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[332] O'Grady (1892, II, p. 158) translates this as 'prophylactic pig/swine'. Nagy (1985, p. 250, n. 50) refers to Joynt's suggestion that *slánga* is a place name (Slane in Meath). See furthermore the *dindsenchas* on Slíab Slanga (Gwynn, 1924, pp. 298-301).

[333] According to Nagy (1985, p. 57), the meat of this *mucc slánga* has magical properties.

this is a variant version of the wild boar from VC.

There are more monstrous boars in texts related to Finn. A poem from *Duanaire Finn* called *The Enchanted Stag* (nr. XIV; edition: Mac Neill, 1904/08, pp. 30-2; translation: *ibid.*, pp. 130-2; dated to the beginning of the 12th century; Murphy, 1941/53, p. 29), describes in its first part a hunt by the *fiana* after a boar (*torc, cullach*) of the same breed as Balar's swine (*mucca*). The place where it lives is named after it (the Gorge of Balar's Pig). Like the pig from AnS, it lives in a mountainous area. The boar is heavy, grisly, powerful, and nobody dares to kill it. However, the 'I' (Caoilte or Oisin?) in the poem engages in a fight with it and carries the great (*mór*) pig three miles on his shoulder. Both men and hounds can eat from the beast for a week.

This beast shares the following characteristics with VC's wild boar: it is called *torc* (1); it is large (2), and there may very well have been hounds engaged in the hunt (4). This boar is a variant version in a wide sense.

Another Fenian poem is *The Magic Pig* (nr. LIV; edition and translation: Murphy, 1933, pp. 184-93; dated to about the middle of the 12th century; *id.*, 1941/53, p. 120). It describes another hunt of the *fiana*. At night a hound is attacked by a monstrous, huge, great pig ("*arracht muice moraidhble*"; *id.*, 1933, p. 186). With its rough, sharp tusks it wounds the dog and leaves. The hound is buried and the *fiana* plan to hunt the wild pig the next day. The beast kills many men and hounds. When the hunt is on, the swift pig approaches them 'as an unknown monster'. Finn throws a stone that breaks its black jowl. The pig utters three cries of distress, after which the chase begins. One of the men is carried on its back for a while. This man wounds the pig with his knife. In the end, the beast is killed with spears.

This wild pig is huge (2); it is pursued by hounds (4) and it attacks (5). Like the other Fenian texts mentioned above, the beast is encountered by a group of men and hounds, and not pursued by hounds while it is rushing at one man, as in VC. Therefore, this is in a wide sense another variant version.

The last Fenian poem that I shall describe in this context is *Caoilte's Urn* (nr. XVII; Mac Neill, 1904/08, pp. 38-45, 140-9; dated about 1200; Murphy, 1941/53, p. 36-7). This poem describes a Fenian hunt as well. A great, horrible pig/boar (*mucc, torc*) approaches. The beast is comparable to every evil (*olc*); it is as large as a mountain and its colours are purplish and brindled black. Hounds are let loose but they are killed by the boar. Spears are thrown by eight warriors of the *fiana* but they cannot hurt the beast. They conclude that it is time for Finn's extraordinary hound Bran to come into action. Finn recites all its exploits and triumphs to Bran. There follows a list of all the wild boars the hound has overcome. When Bran rises the hills shake and the wild boar flees over the mountain. A long pursuit ensues until Bran brings the boar to bay. The beast screeches and then a hideous churl appears. The man threatens the *fiana* and orders them to let the pig come to him. The eight warriors attack, but are overcome and bound. The man then carries the pig on his shoulder, away from Finn and Bran, but not before he has laid *gessi* upon them: they are to follow

the boar. The eight warriors are released on Finn's demand and the whole company enters a *síd*, where the churl strikes the boar with a powerful wand (*"flesg fo comas"*), thereby changing the beast into a young man of great beauty. The poem goes on about Finn falling in love with the boar/young man's sister, but for the present purpose the rest can be left aside.

This beast has the following characteristics in common with VC's wild boar: it is called *torc* (1); it is large (2); it is pursued by hounds (4) and attacks (5). The ending of the tale differs greatly from the episode in VC: first, the wild boar is not killed; second, it turns out to be a young man from the *síd*. This whole description and the motif of transformation make the story very different from VC. But the general lines as described by the aspects are common to all these wild boar tales.

The motif of transformation can also be found in the *dindsenchas* in the stories about the Red Swine of Derbrenn. These are six people, three women and three men, changed into swine. However, there is no sign of them presenting a danger: there are only references to them being hunted. I will not include them, therefore, in this description[334].

There is another wild pig in this genre of text that deserves attention (74: *Loch Conn*, Stokes, 1894, pp. 474-5). An extraordinarily dangerous pig (*mucc*) which devastates the land is described. It is pursued by the pack of hounds of Manannan mac Lir (a supernatural person related to the sea) and the pack of hounds of Mod (?). The episode reads as follows:

"Conart Manannain mic Lir	"Manannan mac Lir's pack of
7 conart Modh	hounds and the pack of Mod
otat Indsi Modh,	(from whom *Insi Mod*, the Clew Bay Islands)
co comrancatar imon muic	met together about a pig
rocri[a]thar a tir impu .i. Indsi Mod,	which wasted the country around those islands,
7 mene etraintis coin in muic sin	and, unless the hounds might interfere with that pig,
ropo criathar lee co hAlbain	it would have made a *criathar* as far as Scotland,
.i. ropo mudach nó ropadh fásach.	that is, there would have been a wreckage or a desert.
Roleblaing iarum ríasna conoib in loch,	In front of the hounds it sprang into the lake,
7 cengsat in coin nadíaidh,	and the hounds pressed after it,
7 rodus-imart doib dib línoibh	and it tackled both packs

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[334] They are found in the *dindsenchas* nr. 71, 73 and 77, perhaps also in 35 (see Stokes, 1894, pp. 470-4, 477-8, 421-2). See also Gwynn (1913, pp. 150-1, 386-95, 404-7, 438-9), who points out that the swine are differently represented in one of these traditions: they are mischievous and aggressive in the *dindsenchas* about Loch Néill (*ibid.*, pp. 404-7, 552).

forsin loch,	on the lake,
7 ni terna cú i mbethaid uáide	and no hound escaped alive,
cen tescad 7 cen bádud.	but all were maimed and drowned.
Doluid dano in muc' riam iartain	Then the pig went forward
cosin indsi fil ann.	to the island which is therein (and there it killed Mod[335]).
Unde Loch Con 7 Muic-inis"	Whence *Loch Con* «Lake of the Hounds» and *Mucc-inis* «Pig-island»"
(Stokes, 1894, p. 474[336])	(*ibid.*, p. 475).

This beast is quite different from the wild boar in VC and it is not slain. It is pursued by hounds (4), attacks (5) and slaughters all that dare to fight it. It is a good example of extraordinarily dangerous wild pigs in early Irish literature, but it is only faintly a variant version of the wild boar in VC.

Finally, a mysterious being is mentioned in *Lebor Gabála Érenn*. It says that Torc Triath was king of the boars (*rí torcraide*; Macalister, 1939/41, pp. 122-3), and in a poem mention is made of Triath, king of the swine (*ibid.*, pp. 132-3). No information is given about what kind of being this is, which is why no comparison with VC's wild boar can be made[337].

It has now become evident from this survey of texts that the episode about the wild boar in VC is unique. There is thus only one variant version in the narrow sense: the episode in Pseudo-Cummian's *Life of Columba*. This text gives an abridged version of VC II.26, but it is placed elsewhere, at the end of the text.

Although the motif of a monstrous wild boar is well-known in classical and Fenian literature, there is not one text that describes the encounter with such a beast similarly to the way Adomnán does this. There are no predecessors in either canonical or non-canonical scripture. Isidore only gives an etymological explanation of the word *aper*. Although the encounter between Hercules and the Erymanthian boar would have been an interesting example for comparison, because it also concerns a man alone facing a

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[335] This remark about Mod is not present in the Irish text. It is found, however, in the small poem that concludes the variant version given by O'Grady (1892, II, p. 468: text; p. 513: translation).

[336] The metrical version (Gwynn, 1913, pp. 408-9) is somewhat different: for instance, only the hounds of Mod are hunting the pig. They come from the islands of Mod and are overcome 'round Tuirbe's tower', which seems to be near Loch Conn. The mighty pig flees from the hounds into the lake and then it drowns them. No mention is made of Mod himself.

[337] The Welsh boar Twrch Trwyth is cognate with the Irish "Orc Triath", according to Anne Ross (1967/93, p. 398). For more about this Welsh boar, see Ross (*s.v.* Torc Trwyth). For a theory about the link between the Irish and Welsh evidence, see Carey (1992). For a further survey of boars and pigs in Celtic cultures, see Ross (*ibid.*, pp. 390-404), Ní Chatháin (1979-80) and Ford (1990).

very dangerous boar, the texts probably available to Adomnán turned out to be too succinct in their statements about this episode to have been of use as a model. The wild boar in the story about Meleager and Atalanta is more elaborately described, but it is not known whether this text was available to Adomnán. Moreover, the circumstances are on the whole opposite to those given in VC. The boar is sent by a Goddess, whereas in VC God helps to overcome the boar. At the same time, the call for help to the divine uttered in the *Metamorphoses* was not effective. Three elements in this story — the encounter between the wild boar and hounds; the beast is encountered by a group of people; weapons are used against it — are also found in most of the above-mentioned Fenian Lays and in AnS. Only in *The Enchanted Stag* is it a person alone who faces the boar and in the Old Irish *Triads* it is a peasant who kills the beast. Attention was given to the *mucc slánga*, of which there might be three representations in MF, but no relation between these three and the boar in VC could be established. The large amount of Fenian material seems to convey that this motif was part of the traditional narratives in Ireland, but as there are only Middle Irish examples extant, no conclusion as to how Adomnán may have used details from it is possible. Something similar is true of the classical literature: the theme of an encounter with a wild boar was well-known, but the extant classical texts do not offer clues about what could have been used for VC.

One could conclude here that no model is used by Adomnán to describe this miracle. It should be noted though, that the peculiar way in which the monster is overcome in this chapter — sacred gestures and a kind of formula — is repeated in the next one: II.27. It is not unthinkable that Adomnán adapted what he knew about heroic wild boar encounters to a hagiographic model. He uses neither force nor violence but raises his hand and utters words of power which are his 'weapons' against the beast. I will return to this in 2.3.4. For now it suffices to conclude that the description of the wild boar is probably of the integrated kind. Adomnán may have adapted heroic classical and/or native Irish examples to his hagiographical aim, but it is now impossible to trace to what extent these other traditions may have played a role.

2.3.2.3 The water beast

The third monster is referred to as *aquatilis bestia* and *bilua*. By this stage I have already described many water monsters: the ones referred to as *bestia* in 1.3.2 and as *belua* in 2.3.2.1. I will now consider which of these have characteristics in common with the monster from the river Ness. I will not limit the search to river monsters, as it is conceivable that the monster central here surfaces in the river mouth. Charles Thomas points this out in an article, in which he identifies both the place of action ("near the mouth of the River Ness—where it flows into the Moray Firth and the North Sea"; *id.*, 1988, p. 42) and the biological species (an isolated

bearded seal or a walrus, *ibid.*) to which the monster would belong[338].

The texts in the **Vulgate** that describe water monsters designated *bestia* and *belua* were described above. The verse about the miraculous inhabitants of the sea (Sir 43:27, quoted above, 2.3.2.1) is too general. The four beasts rising from the sea in Daniel's nocturnal vision (Dn 7) are very different from VC's river monster — so much so that a comparison is unnecessary. The same is true of the beast from the sea, which is connected with them, described in Apc 13 (for more about these beasts, see 3.3.2.5). Neither is there is any need for a comparison with Leviathan: it is clear that this huge primeval monster is not related to the river monster. In short, the Vulgate offers no model for the monster in the river Ness.

As I wrote in 1.3.2, no relevant *bestiae* that are water monsters could be found in **non-canonical scripture**, nor did a search for *beluae* yield any clues. There is thus no example found in these texts after which the river monster in VC might be modelled.

When **Isidore** uses *bestiae* to refer to water beasts, he is either writing about very small ones: the *enhydros*, which is able to live in a river (XII.2.36; see 2.3.2.5 for more about this *bestiola*), or very large ones: the whale (*ballena*) in XII.6.7. Isidore also refers to the whale using the word *belua* (in XII.6.6), the other name of the river monster in VC. However, Adomnán does not say that the river monster is great, nor can it be called a very small beast. From this it becomes clear that there is no predecessor of the river monster in the *Etymologiae*.

Among **Hiberno-Latin texts** two are of importance (VC itself and NBA; this episode is absent in Pseudo-Cummian's *Life*). In VC *belua* and *bestia* also occur in other sections. As mentioned above, *belua* is one of the names of the sea monster. It was concluded there that the monsters have a few things in common, but are obviously different. The teeth of a monster (*belua*) are used as sword-decoration (II.39; see also note 310). *Bestia* most often occurs in the episode on the river monster; furthermore, it is to be found in Adomnán's summary (I.1) and in the heading preceding this episode (II.26). Finally, it refers to wild animals (II.37), which are not relevant to this study.

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[338] Thomas wrote this article in order to clear up a prevalent misunderstanding: the quotation of VC as the first source in which the Loch Ness monster is mentioned. (See, for instance, Hughes, 1972, p. 225, n. 3.) I agree with this: according to the tales the Loch Ness monster would be a huge beast, whereby one continually refers to the profound depth of the loch. The river Ness is not as deep as the loch and the river monster is not described as large in VC. Thomas demythologises the episode and in this way he arrives at an identification of both the place and the beast. Elsewhere (Borsje, 1994a), I have commented upon this 'historical-critical' method in which mythological or other literary motifs are reduced to 'ordinary' historical events stripped of their supernatural aspects.

In NBA Jasconius is referred to as *belua* (§§15, 27) and as *bestia* (§15; 1). This beast is enormous/savage (§15: *inmanissima bestia*; 2?). It appears at the surface to serve as a 'place' on which Brendan and his monks alight (6). Although Jasconius shares these three aspects, it is clear that this monster differs a lot from the river monster. Furthermore, there are the two sea monsters in §16 which can be compared with the river monster from VC. The first (attacking) beast is called *belua* and *bestia* (1). The sea monster gives the impression that it wants to devour the voyagers (4). It probably has an open mouth (7), as Brendan refers to its mouth in his prayer, and it is very fast (9), but it does not flee. This beast thus shares some aspects with the river monster, but it differs in that it is very large. They can be seen as variant versions of each other, but only in a wide sense. The other (defending) beast is completely different, for this enormous creature spews fire. Finally, many beasts (*bestiae*) are seen in the clear sea mentioned above (§21, see 1.3.2.). As indicated above, this is an interesting episode, although of no specific importance to the monster under discussion.

In short, in Hiberno-Latin texts monsters sharing some aspects with the river monster in VC — the sea monster in VC, Jasconius and the attacking sea monster in NBA — are present, but they are too different to be related directly to the monster central here. The three other beasts are enormous and this is not said of the monster in the river Ness. It should furthermore be noted that in Brendan's adventure in NBA §16, words are spoken to overcome the danger. However, in Brendan's case it is a prayer instead of a command/formula which makes another monster intervene, and the attacking monster dies. Therefore, the result of the encounter is considerably different because Columba's beast is only driven away.

In this section about **Old and Middle Irish texts** attention will first be paid to BCC. Here, a later version of the story can be found (§55):

"Dia mboi tra Colum Cille i n-aroli
lathi ic procept dona slogaib,
luid aroli duine uadib
darsin abaind bói i comfocus doib,
na beth oc estec[h]t fri brethir nDé.

Not-mbenand in nathir he isin usce
co rus-marb fo cétoir.
Tuccad a chorp i fhiadnaise Coluim
Cille
7 dos-beirside croiss
dia bachaill dar a bruinde
cond-eracht fo cétoir"
(Herbert, 1988, p. 238)

"On another day when Colum Cille
was preaching to the crowds,
a certain person went away
across the nearby river
to avoid listening to the word of God.

The serpent struck him in the water
and killed him instantly.
His body was brought before Colum Cille,
who made the sign of the cross
with his staff over the man's chest,
and he immediately arose"
(*ibid.*, p. 261).

In this later text the monster has been replaced by a serpent (*nath(a)ir*[339]). Thomas explains this insertion as follows:

> "By the 10th century, there were many "Lives" of saints in circulation in which snakes, or serpents, or dragons—terrestrial or aquatic, with or without wings, silent or bellowing—figured as stock properties in every variety of resuscitation or repulsion miracle (Cross 1954)" (Thomas, 1988, p. 43).

I am curious as to which 10th century *Lives* he has in mind. As mentioned above (in the Introduction) Cross (1952/69) does not give any dates in his *Motif Index*. Based on the survey of monsters in Hiberno-Latin and Irish texts that I made in the context of this study[340], my impression is that most of the fantastic serpents and dragons belong to later texts[341]. That being so, the insertion has not been satisfactorily explained. I would like to undertake another attempt.

The monster in VC is somewhat different from the snake in BCC. The snake is found in a river (3), but the name Ness is not given; the serpent strikes, slays or wounds (*benaid*) and the monster bites (*mordeo*) (4). The result is the same: a man is killed. This man is, however, different in the two texts: the Pict in VC was already dead when Columba arrived; in BCC it is a man running away from the saint's sermon. It should be noted, though, that the episode from BCC bears similarity with a text about St Martin of Tours: *Dialogi*, 'The Dialogues', (*c.* 404; Mönnich, 1962, p. 9) by Sulpicius Severus. The relevant section (III.9.4) reads:

"Serpens flumen secans in ripam, in qua constiteramus, adnabat:	"A serpent swimming in the river was cutting his way toward the bank where we had stopped.
in nomine, inquit, Domini iubeo te redire.	"In God's name," said Martin[342], "I order you to go back."
Mox se mala bestia ad uerbum sancti retorsit et in ulteriorem ripam nobis inspectantibus transmeauit" (Halm, 1866, p. 207)	At this word from the saint, the evil beast[343] at once reversed its course and, under our very eyes, swam across to the farther bank" (Peebles, 1949/70, p. 237).

[339] This later text may have influenced William Reeves (1857, p. 140, n. c), who seems to equate VC's *bestia* with water serpents. The texts he mentions are, incidentally, too late for this study's scope.

[340] This survey will hopefully be published in the future as the earlier mentioned catalogue of early Irish texts about monsters.

[341] There is, moreover, no need to find examples in the 10th century in particular, as BCC is a text dated to the 12th century. Thomas (1988, p. 43) dates BCC to the 9th or 10th century but this is the date of BCC's posited exemplar (see also Borsje, 1994a, p. 31, n. 25).

[342] Lit.: 'In the name of the Lord', he said.

[343] Peebles mistranslates *bestia* by 'serpent'.

Consequently, those present perceive this in amazement. St Martin, however, sighs because serpents listen to him whereas people do not.

A comparison of these three versions of this similar event in the *Dialogues*, VC and BCC supplies figure 3:

Figure 3

Dial. III.9	VC II.27	BCC 55
serpens/bestia in river	*bestia/belua* in river	*nathir* in river
saint on bank	saint on bank	saint on bank
(halting)	(wants to cross)	(preaching)
serpent approaches bank	beast approaches monk	serpent kills 'disobedient' man
saint repels serpent	saint repels beast	saint resurrects man
command to return	command to return	no encounter
invocation of the Lord's name	invocation of God's name	
	sign of the cross	
immediate return of the beast	immediate return of the beast	

Sulpicius Severus's *Dialogi* belonged to Adomnán's sources (Brüning, 1917, pp. 247-9). It is not impossible that this episode served as a model for the one in VC. It is also conceivable that the author of BCC, if familiar with both texts[344], combined these two older texts to a new version.

In 1.3.2 I describe several Old and Middle Irish texts about monsters designated *bíast/píast*. I will now compare them with the monster in the river Ness from VC.

The *muirdris* from EFmL is, just like the river monster, an *aquatilis bestia/píast uiscide* (1). The *muirdris* is *úathmar*; the water beast is *ferox* (2). This is not exactly the same, but both words give an indication of the frightening character of the monsters. The river monster surfaces in a river mouth; the *muirdris* lives in an inlet of the sea that consists of an inner and outer bay (3). Both are extremely dangerous as they cause the death of a

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[344] VC was used as a source by the author of BCC (see Brüning, 1917, pp. 272-6, and Herbert, 1988, pp. 182-4). There is a reference to St Martin in BCC (§35; Herbert, 1988, pp. 231, 256): Columba went to Tours where he took a gospel-book, which had been on Martin's breast for a hundred years, out of the grave and brought it to Derry. This is, however, no evidence of the *Dialogues* being used as a source in BCC. It is not clear whether this text was known to the author of BCC.

man (4) and they live in the depths (5). These two monsters are conquered in a different way and their specific characteristics are also quite different.

In TBF §18 the monster (*bíast*, 1) lives in a pool of a river (3) and it grabs the hero of the tale (Froech) and hangs on or bites in his side ("*ocus a mmíl inna thóeb*" (Meid, 1970, p. 37), 'and the beast in his side'; 4). Thanks to supernatural women, the warrior does not die from the wounds inflicted upon him by the beast. The monster is first hidden in the depths (5) but surfaces (6) to fight with the hero. If it is so that the monster bites, then it opens its mouth (7). The hero is sent into the water by a malicious king in order to fetch rowan berries; in VC Columba orders that one of his companions fetches a boat from the other side of the river and one monk voluntarily goes into the water to do this. While the hero is attacked by the beast in the water, a person on the bank comes to his aid. This is a parallel motif with VC, where the monk is threatened in the water and aided by a person on the bank. There are thus some similarities between these two stories, but I see no reason to follow Carney (1955/79, pp. 86, 115, 122) who considers VC as a source for TBF. In my eyes, the differences are too great to draw such a conclusion. In VC the saint wants a boat and not the death of the monk; in TBF the king plans evil towards the hero. The king even sends the hero twice into the water, whence he returns unharmed after a first swim. When he wants to come ashore, the king asks for the berries. The hero gets them, returns with them and hands them over. He is asked for more and, this third time, the monster surfaces. This is quite different from what happens in VC. Moreover, the description of the help differs considerably: the hero is aided by the daughter (Findabair) of the ill-wishing king who swims to the hero bringing him his sword, whereas the saint stays on the bank of the river while he helps the monk who went into the water for him. Carney says about the sword that it "is chosen by the author as the heroic analogy to the Christian cross" (*ibid.*, p. 122), but one can also posit an opposite development. One of the messages in hagiography may very well have been a contradiction of the heroic ethos: problems should be solved with the cross instead of the sword.

The monster in the loch that Cú Chulainn has to fight in FB §§85-6 is called *píast* (1); it lives in the depths of this loch (5) and opens its mouth (7). These are all the aspects the two beasts have in common. The monsters described in ICUC also have only a little in common with VC's monster: the monsters in §66 are called *píasta* (1) and are *adúathmar* (2). The *bíast* (1) in §67 only surfaces (6) and plunges down into the depths (5) again. Obviously, the monsters in FB and ICUC have too little in common with the monster in VC to be of importance. The same is true of the *bíasta* (1) in ApBB: they are not described, but the motif of their fight could be connected with the fighting sea monsters in NBA and not with the river monster in VC.

More interesting is the monster in the preface to *Amra Senáin*. This *bíast* (1) lives in a tidal estuary in the river Shannon (3). It attacks people, swallowing them and their boat (4), thereby opening its mouth (7). Concerning the aid, *p*AS is more similar to VC: the smith and his company are swallowed boat and all by the water monster and St Senán defeats the

monster from the bank on which he is standing. The text does not describe what the actions of St Senán exactly consist of.

There is, however, another supernatural person — the Dagda — who defeats the *muirselche* and he does this just like Columba with gestures and words of power. The episode is found in the longer version of TE and the related *dindšenchas* (see above, 1.3.2). The text is not very ample in describing this incident. In the *dindšenchas* the Dagda hits the beast, but TE does not say what he does with his club of fury/storm. Does he summon the monster while standing on the bank, as Senán does? There is some similarity with Columba's encounter: the beast receives a command to turn and it disappears. However, the saint does not use a weapon and the Dagda neither invokes a divinity nor makes the sign of the cross. The description of the *muirselche* is, moreover, quite different from the portrayal of the river monster.

It is now possible to conclude that not many texts have been used as a source for the episode about the river monster in VC. A search in the Vulgate, non-canonical writings and Isidore's *Etymologiae* did not result in texts that could be connected with the one under discussion. NBA was the Hiberno-Latin text that came into consideration, but Jasconius and the attacking sea monster were judged to be variant versions only in a wide sense. The two monsters are huge, which is not said of the monster central here. Old and Middle Irish texts offer more clues: BCC gives a variant version in that it describes a similar adventure of Columba; the monster, however, is in this text a water snake. This text led to another, a Latin work that may have been used as a source by Adomnán: Sulpicius Severus's *Dialogi*. In this text, a serpent threatens a group of people and is sent away by a command of a saint. Adomnán was much more elaborate than Sulpicius Severus in describing a similar miracle. I will return to this below (2.3.3). Furthermore, the *muirdris* from EFmL was again mentioned as it gave the Irish equivalent of the Latin *aquatilis bestia*, but on the whole this beast is quite different from the river monster. TBF and *p*AS also describe a beast that attacks a person/group of persons in the water, while someone on the bank comes to their aid. *p*AS is closer to VC: here, it is also a saint who helps from the shore and the fight is fought with words, whereas in TBF it is a royal woman who brings a sword with which the beast is killed. Another text was adduced where a beast was commanded to disappear, to which it obeyed: TE and the related *dindšenchas* in which the Dagda dispelled the *muirselche*. The majority of the variant versions are thus to be found in Old and Middle Irish texts. The river monster should be categorised as belonging to the integrated kind as Adomnán seems to have used the *Dialogi* as a source and elaborated upon the relevant episode.

2.3.2.4 The vipers

The episode in VC in which Columba renders serpents harmless is an example of the broader motif in which a person with a supernatural aspect

(a divinity, a hero or a saint) banishes obnoxious beasts. Sometimes the absence of a harmful kind of beast is ascribed to a peculiarity of the place involved. According to Alexander Krappe (1941, p. 231), these traditions have come into existence based on the observation of the absence of a certain species in reality. This absence is explained in stories by attributing it to supernatural intervention.

There is a wealth of material dealing with this motif (see the articles of Krappe, 1941 and 1947, in which many traditions were collected). I will only deal with the motif where it concerns serpents on Iona or in Ireland. Although the episode in VC deals with Iona, traditions on Ireland will be included too, because this can be seen as the immediate context of Columba's miracle.

Tales about expelling and rendering obnoxious beasts harmless — one could call them etiological myths — are not limited to Christianity; the motif has a much wider range. There are, for instance, examples of pre-Christian tales that were christianised[345]. Because VC is a hagiographical text it should be considered against its biblical/Christian background. For this reason the motif will be set in a broader context as 'the power over serpents' when I describe its occurrence in the Vulgate. Thereafter the motif will be narrowed to its proper description again: rendering harmless a collective of serpents.

In the **Vulgate** the power over serpents[346] is to be seen against the background of the eternal conflict between God and the primeval serpent/dragon in the Chaos fight or the eschatological combat. God's opponent Leviathan is called *serpens* and *cetus* (Is 27:1). References to the Chaos conflict between God and Leviathan can be found above (1.3.2). There are also texts dealing with the Cosmic Combat, where the opponent of God is called *coluber*, 'serpent, snake', (see Iob 26:13[347]) or *draco*, 'dragon,

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[345] An example of this is Herakles (the original Greek name of Hercules) who banished all wild beasts (for instance, bears, wolves and serpents) from Crete (Diodorus of Sicily, Βιβλιοθήκη ἱστορική, 'The Library of History', IV.17.3, first century BC; edition and translation: Oldfather, 1935/61, see pp. 396-9), which was ascribed to St Paul in a more recent period (Krappe, 1941, p. 231, n. 9; id., 1947, p. 323; Wildhaber, 1976, pp. 500-1).

[346] Because *vipera* also has a general meaning of 'serpent', apart from 'viper', it is not possible to limit the study to the occurrence of this word only; other terms for 'serpent' have to be considered too.

[347] The Vulgate reads: "*spiritus eius ornavit caelos et obsetricante manu eius eductus est coluber tortuosus*", '[God's] breath has adorned the skies while [God's] obstetric hand has drawn out the tortuous serpent'. It should be noted that the Hebrew text describes this encounter in fiercer terms than the Vulgate. It says (in the translation of the Revised Standard Version, 1946/71): "By his wind the heavens were made fair; his hand pierced the fleeing serpent". In the preceding verse the Hebrew text mentions God's conflict with (the sea and) the monster called Rahab; the Vulgate reads instead of Rahab *superbus*, 'the proud one'.

snake' (see Ps 73:13-14[348]; Is 51:9). In anticipation of the final or escha-
tological battle's result, a (messianic) vision of peace and safety may be
portrayed in which serpents have lost their danger, so that one can easily
let babies play with them (*aspis*, 'asp, viper', and *regulus*, 'basilisk', in Is
11:8) and the snake (*serpens*) will eat dust in that time (Is 65:25). God's
power over the serpent is evident not only at the end of time but also at the
beginning. God's curse condemns this beast to crawling on its breast and
eating of earth (*serpens* in Gn 3:14). A more general example of God's
power over serpents is present in Dt 8:15 where Israel is reminded of the
time that God led them through the terrible wilderness where dangerous
beasts lived (*serpens flatu adurens*, 'serpent that burns with its breath',
scorpio, 'scorpion', and *dipsas*, 'serpent (whose bite causes violent
thirst)').

God also bestows the power over serpents upon others. A first example
of this is in the context of God's curse on the serpent (*serpens*): there will
be animosity between the serpent and the woman and their seed[349] and
the woman shall crush the serpent's head (Gn 3:15). A second example is
to be found in Ex 7:8-12: God gives Aaron the power to change his rod
into a serpent (*coluber*). However, the Egyptian wise ones and evil-doers
are also capable of this magic art: their rods become dragons/ serpents
(*dracones*). Of course God's power is superior: Aaron's rod devours the
Egyptian rods. A new motif is introduced by the third example: God grants
the cure of serpents' bites (Nm 21:6-9). When Israel is dissatisfied in the
desert God punishes them by sending fiery serpents (*serpentes*). The leader
Moses functions as intermediary: God has him make a brazen serpent[350],
which must be put up as a sign. Every person who looks at this sign will
be cured.

Anyone who trusts in God does not need to fear danger, Ps 90:13 says
in the fourth example. One can tread on the asp (*aspis*) and the basilisk
(*basiliscus*) or trample on the lion (*leo*) and the dragon (*draco*[351]). This
promise also occurs in the New Testament. One of the signs that Jesus
describes which will accompany his followers is that they will take up
serpents (*serpentes*) without receiving injury (Mc 16:18). Another affirma-
tion of this line of thought is the seventh example: Jesus gives his pupils
the power to tread on serpents (*serpentes*), scorpions and all hostile power

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[348] PsG 73:14a reads "*tu confregisti capita draconis*", 'you have destroyed the
heads of the dragon', whereas PsH 73:14a gives "*tu confregisti capita Leviathan*",
'you have destroyed the heads of Leviathan'.

[349] This motif returns in the *Apocalypse* in the war between the dragon and the
woman's seed (Apc 12:17).

[350] This brazen serpent is later destroyed during a religious reform movement,
because the Israelites were burning incense to it (IV Rg 18:4). In the NT the
lifting up of the brazen serpent on Moses's staff is compared with the lifting up of
the 'Son of Man' (a prefiguration of Christ on the cross; Io 3:14).

[351] The Hebrew text (Ps 91:13) mentions these pairs of animals: שחל, 'lion', and
פתן, 'venomous serpent'; כפיר, 'young lion', and תנין, 'serpent, dragon, sea
monster'.

without receiving injury (Lc 10:19).

A concrete instance of this is given in Act 28:3-6. A serpent (*vipera*) seizes the hand of St Paul. The inhabitants of the island where this happens (Malta) see the beast (*bestia*) hanging on his hand and they conclude that Paul is being punished for murder by a supernatural power (*Ultio*, 'Revenge'). However, Paul is not bothered at all and shakes the beast off into a fire[352].

The ninth and final example of God giving power over serpents to others comes from the *Apocalypse*. The Archangel Michael and his army fight with the great red dragon (*draco*) who is the ancient serpent (*serpens*; Apc 12:3-9) and the Devil. After this eschatological combat and other events an angel locks this dragon/serpent (temporarily) in the Abyss (Apc 20:1-3).

These are the examples from the Vulgate which can be viewed as the background of Columba's power over serpents. God or Jesus confer their power over serpents to those who obey and serve them. This is in line with the condition of Columba's blessing: the inhabitants must obey Christ's commands. Closest to Columba's miracle is that of St Paul's. It also concerns a *vipera* (1); the event takes place on an island (2), and the power of the serpent's poison does not work for Paul (4) because he serves Christ. There is no mention of three-forked tongues in the Vulgate.

In the **non-canonical texts** this line is continued[353]. One text deserves special attention: the second chapter in the *Lives of the Prophets* about Jeremiah (LivPro 2:1-7). The prophet Jeremiah was buried in Egypt, where he is held in high esteem by the Egyptians. The text seems to give two reasons for this, one pertaining to the situation during his life and the other concerning circumstances after his death. Because of Jeremiah's prayers the asps and the beasts of the waters[354] left the Egyptians. The dust from the place where he was buried is used to cure bites of asps. Alexander the Macedonian took the remains of the prophet to Alexandria where he placed them in a circle around the city, because of which neither asps came to the land nor crocodiles to the river[355].

It is important to note that this text combines the expelling of serpents

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[352] Since then, is told in later texts, serpents on Malta are harmless and Maltese earth heals serpents' bites (Barb, 1953, pp. 3 ff.; Wildhaber, 1976, p. 501).

[353] The eschatological time of peace is, for instance, described in SibOr 3:794-795: "Serpents and asps will sleep with babies and will not harm them, for the hand of God will be upon them".

[354] The text adds that these beasts were called *Nephoth* by the Egyptians and crocodiles by the Greeks. In a footnote D.R.A. Hare (in Charlesworth, 1985, p. 387, n. *e*) refers to C.C. Torrey, according to whom the original text did not speak of crocodiles, but read *ephôth* which is merely the transliterated plural of the Hebrew word *'ep'eh*, 'viper'. By this term the Egyptian Jews referred to asps.

[355] The text continues about serpents who were called 'snake-fighters', but this must be left aside here.

by a holy man with the item that this power over serpents is extended to the dust of his grave (earth) and his remains. These two aspects are also present in traditions about Ireland, which will be shown below. This text is thus of importance as the motifs are broadly similar to the miracle from VC. Its details differ, however. For instance, it is not a blessing but a prayer that makes the beasts harmless in the *Life of Jeremiah*. Moreover, they are driven away instead of their poison losing its power.

Judging by **Isidore's** information there is no need either to expel serpents from Ireland or to render them harmless, for he writes about this island: "*Illic nulla anguis*" (*Etymologiae* XIV.6.6), 'There is no serpent there'.

Rolf Baumgarten (1984, pp. 192-3) demonstrates that Isidore's source for the section to which this sentence belongs was *Historiarum adversum paganos libri VII*, 'The Seven Books of Histories against the Pagans', (completed in 417 AD; edition: Zangemeister, 1882) by Paulus Orosius. In the section involved (I.2.80-1), however, Orosius does not discuss serpents. This does not mean that Isidore was the first one to supply this information about Ireland. In the third century AD, Gaius Julius Solinus writes about Ireland in his *Collectanea rerum memorabilium* 22.3[356], 'Collection of memorable things' (CRM; edition: Mommsen, 1958): "*illic nullus anguis*", 'there is no serpent there'. Although Solinus considers *anguis* as a masculine word — it is feminine in Isidore's view — Isidore used Solinus's work as a source.

This becomes evident when one compares the context in which the sentence on serpents has its place. In both works this is followed by the remark, that in Ireland birds are rare (*avis rara*; CRM 22.3 and *Etymologiae* XIV.6.6). Solinus continues describing the inhospitable and warlike people who live there. Isidore, however, goes on to say that there are no bees either (*apis nulla*), which is mentioned by Solinus a bit further on (*apis nusquam*; CRM 22.4). His information that Irish dust and pebbles repel bees has also been taken over by Isidore.

Therefore, in the section which deals with the absence of serpents in Ireland, Isidore used at least two sources with Solinus the one to offer the important information on snakes. Neither Solinus nor Isidore gives an explanation for this absence. It may well be that the tradition is based on real observation. However, as mentioned above, sometimes a supernatural cause is referred to in cases of an absence of this kind. There are two ways in which this is done. The first one is the intervention of a sacred person; a special form of this is to be found in VC in which serpents on Iona become harmless thanks to Columba.

The second one is an explanation which refers to the extraordinary characteristics of such a place. This second form is to be found in the work of a contemporary of Adomnán. Beda Venerabilis (672/673 — 735) writes

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[356] Wildhaber (1976, p. 497) also refers to CRM 22.8, but this section deals with a British island called Tanatus instead of Ireland. This information about 'Tanatos' is found in the *Etymologiae* in XIV.6.3.

in his *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum* I.1, 'The Ecclesiastical History of the English People' (HE; dated to 731, edition and translation: Colgrave, Mynors, 1969), that in Ireland no reptile is to be seen and no serpent has the power to live there (*"nullus uiuere serpens ualeat"*; *ibid.*, p. 18). In Bede's version attempts to import serpents fail, because they die of the scent of the air when they approach the island. Not only has Irish air this special quality, but also almost everything the island produces is effective against poison[357]. If one is bitten by a snake, one should scrape something off an Irish manuscript and drink this something with water to cure the bite.

It is clear that I am dealing here with two different, but related traditions. One is the presence of harmless serpents on Iona[358] caused by Columba's blessing (VC). The other is the absence of serpents in Ireland (CRM; the *Etymologiae*) caused by Ireland's special qualities (HE).

Before turning to Hiberno-Latin texts, first the special characteristic of the serpents' tongues and other holy men encountering serpents in Latin sources of Adomnán require some attention.

The aspect of the three-forked tongues of the vipers (VC III.23) can be traced back to Latin sources. According to Joseph Thomas Fowler (1894/1920, p. 232[359]), this is a mistake[360] which Adomnán took over from Virgil, Pliny "and others". Virgil mentions the three-forked tongue (*lingua trisulca*) of the serpent both in his *Georgica* III.439, 'Georgics' (edition: Mynors, 1990), and in his *Aeneid* II.475. In the section in *Georgica* about pests he uses several terms, among which *vipera*, and in the relevant part of the *Aeneid* he uses the word *coluber*. Pliny says in a section on the

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[357] Compare this with the bee-expelling quality of Irish dust and pebbles in Solinus and Isidore; the curative effect of the dust of Jeremiah's grave and the serpent-banishing quality of his remains in the *Lives of the Prophets* (see above).

[358] This is, however, contradicted by J.T. Fowler: "There are no snakes in Iona, but if ever there had been any they would soon have been exterminated during the human occupation of so small an island" (*id.*, 1894/1920, p. 216). In the *addenda* of 1920 he writes: "Note that St. Columba is not credited with driving snakes out of Iona, only with rendering them harmless. If there were any snakes in Iona in his time, they would probably be the naturally harmless snakes, *Coluber natrix*, or the blindworm, *Anguis fragilis*" (*ibid.*, p. 249). It seems to have been very important to Fowler to harmonise text with reality. In the first instance he linked Columba's blessing with the expelling of serpents from Ireland by St Patrick, therefore he then stressed the absence of serpents; in the later additions he realised that serpents were not expelled from Iona, which is why he introduces the possible existence of *harmless* serpents in Columba's time. He does not seem to have problems with the presence of serpents in Ireland, even though this fact contradicts St Patrick's actions (see *ibid.*, p. 245), perhaps because the tradition on St Patrick is late (from the 12th century onwards). Reeves says in 1857 that snakes or vipers have never been seen on Iona (*id.*, 1857, p. 142, n. *d*).

[359] The references on this page should read: *Georg.* III.439 instead of III.639 and *N.H.* XI.LXV.171 instead of XI.161.

[360] For more about this mistake, which might be a mistranslation from Greek (τριχῶδες, 'thin as hair'), see Mynors (1990, p. 246).

tongue about the serpent's (*serpens*) tongue that it is extremely slender, three-forked (*trisulca*), darting, black and extremely long (NH XI.LXV.171). In Ovid's *Metamorphoses* III.32-4 a serpent (*anguis*) sacred to Mars is described: it has a golden crest, eyes flashing fire, a body swollen with venom, a triple tongue[361] and teeth in a triple row. In IX.65, however, a snake (*anguis*) with a forked tongue (*lingua bisulca*) is mentioned. But then again, Ovid may not have been known to Adomnán, whereas Pliny's NH and Virgil's *Aeneid* probably were. The commentary of Servius does not mention anything about the three-forked tongue. It is interesting to note, though, that there is a commentary on Virgil's *Bucolica* and *Georgica*, with Irish glosses, which was known to the early Irish (see Lambert, 1986, p. 87). In these *Scholia Bernensia, trisulcis* from *Georgica* III.439 is explained:

"Serpens triplicem linguam habere dicitur,	The serpent is said to have a three-fold tongue —
sed a uibratione linguae nisi fallor,	but (this is), unless I am mistaken, because of the vibration of its tongue
sic et Cerberus trifauci dicitur ore" (Hagen, 1867/1967, p. 278)	— like Cerberus who is also said to have a three-throated mouth.

Here the three-forked tongue seems to be explained away. Therefore, it must have been Pliny's NH and/or (one of) Virgil's works directly that influenced Adomnán[362].

Finally, there is a Latin source that Adomnán used (Brüning, 1917, pp. 249-52) in which two saints encounter a collection of serpents. This is *Dialogorum Libri IV*[363], 'The Four Books of Dialogues' (edition and translation into French: De Vogüé and Antin, 1979; translation into English: Zimmerman, 1959/83), by Gregory the Great (*c.* 540 — 604). In *Dialogue* III.15.11-2 Gregory tells of a deacon who wants to visit St Florentius. To the deacon's horror the surroundings of the saint's cell are infested with serpents (*serpentes*). Terrified he calls: "Servant of the Lord, pray!" Florentius appears, raising his eyes and arms to the sky, and he prays to the Lord asking for the removal of the plague (*pestis*). Up till then the sky was clear, but now "the heavens suddenly shook with loud crashes

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[361] Literally: "*tres vibrant linguae*" (Miller, 1916/71, p. 126), '[its] three tongues vibrated'.

[362] It should be noted that the list of phrases from VC given by Brüning (cp. note 302 above) which she sees as influenced by Virgil is challenged by Herren (1981, p. 124). The only parallel accepted by Herren is the one under discussion here, but he is in favour of Pliny's NH as the source involved here as this work "definitely was known to the Irish" (*ibid.*, p. 147, n. 49). However, Hofman's study (1988) has shown that the same is true of works by Virgil. I am indebted to Rijcklof Hofman for giving me information on and references to the commentaries on Virgil.

[363] O'Loughlin (1994b, pp. 41, 52) has established that this work was certainly on Iona during Adomnán's life.

of thunder that struck all the serpents dead" (Zimmerman, 1959/83, p. 139). Florentius comments to God upon the corpses that are lying everywhere and immediately a flock of birds turns up that 'cleans' the surroundings.

In *Dialogue* III.35.2 Gregory describes a priest called Amantius who spreads death to serpents (*serpentes*) everywhere around him. When he finds a serpent he makes the sign of the cross, because of which the snake dies with its inner parts burst open. Even when they try to hide in their holes Amantius blesses the entrance with the sign of the cross and one can draw out the corpses.

While these examples from Gregory's *Dialogues* were available to Adomnán, he does not make Columba act as rigorously as Florentius and Amantius. Columba was also capable of this effective way of dealing with dangers, as was to be seen in the wild boar episode. However, in the serpent miracle the danger is removed on condition that Christ's commandments are kept.

Comparing these texts with VC we can say the following: only Virgil's *Georgics* uses the word *vipera* (1). CRM, the *Etymologiae* and HE deal with an island (2), although this is about Ireland instead of Iona. The three-forked serpents' tongues (3) may have been taken over from Virgil's work(s) and/or Pliny's NH. In CRM, the *Etymologiae* and HE, the poison of serpents is not powerless (4) but the serpents themselves are absent. Solinus and Isidore give no explanation, although they point out that Ireland's dust and pebbles have a special quality; in Bede's version Irish air and Irish products are said to be effective against poison. Bede just states this as a fact, without telling why this is so. The two tales in Gregory's *Dialogues* are completely different: the serpents are killed.

Summarising: only the works of Virgil and Pliny can be considered a source for the third aspect of the snakes. CRM, the *Etymologiae* and HE (which in any case cannot have been a source because it is later than VC) deal with a variant tradition, which has left its traces in Irish texts as will be shown now.

The **Hiberno-Latin** text that needs attention first is again the later version of Columba's *Life*. Columba's blessing of Iona as described by Pseudo-Cummian (§17) is an abridged version of the episode in VC III.23. The details from II.28 are absent, which is why a different picture emerges from Pseudo-Cummian's miracle. In II.28 Adomnán gives the blessing in direct speech; Pseudo-Cummian gives the consequence of the blessing just like VC III.23[364]. This means that the condition from II.28 (the inhabit-

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[364] This results in the poison of serpents losing its power in Adomnán's version. In Pseudo-Cummian's version it says: "*et ex ea die vipera nulla nec homini nec pecori nocua fuit*" (Brüning, 1917, p. 300). Metcalfe (1895, p. 41) translates this as: "and from that day there was no viper in it hurtful to man or beast". I am afraid that this translation is misleading: now one is given the impression that vipers disappear from the island, because of Metcalfe's adding the words "in it".

ants of Iona must keep Christ's commandments), which is not repeated in Book III of VC, is absent in Pseudo-Cummian. Therefore, the blessing is given unconditionally there. Another difference is the absence of the special characteristic that Adomnán gives to the snakes in VC III.23 — their three-forked tongues — in Pseudo-Cummian's version.

Two texts are variant versions of the motif of 'the absence of serpents'. The first text is the Latin beginning of a version of the LGE compilation: *Min(i)ugud gabál nÉrenn* (...), 'An Explanation of the Takings of Ireland (...)' (see Thurneysen, 1913, p. 5). Baumgarten (1984, p. 189) dates this text to the 11th century. Thurneysen (1913, p. 6) edited it for the first time and it is also to be found in R.A. Stewart Macalister's edition, together with a translation (Macalister, 1932/38, pp. 162-5). The Irish title is followed by a Latin account in which Ireland is compared with Paradise. Paradise is in the southern quarter of the East; Ireland is near the West in the northern part. Because they have a 'corresponding' position on the earth, they have a similar nature: there is no beast/monster (*bestia*) in Paradise and in Ireland there is neither serpent (*serpens*) nor lion (*leo*) nor frog (*rana*) nor harmful mouse (*mus*[365]) nor dragon (*draco*) nor scorpion (*scorpio*) nor any other harmful animal (*noxium animal*) but for the wolf (*lupus*). The name Hibernia is explained and then Isidore is quoted (*Etymologiae* XIV.6.6), so that the absence of serpents is repeated: "*Illic nulla angis, auis rara, apes nulla*" (Thurneysen, 1913, p. 6). The absence of serpents is thus connected here with Ireland's special nature, which is analogous to that of Paradise because of their 'corresponding' position on earth.

The second text belongs to the genre of *mirabilia*, 'miracles'. It is a poem from the second half of the 11th century, attributed to Bishop Patrick of Dublin[366] and entitled *Versus sancti Patricii episcopi de mirabilibus Hibernie*, 'Verses of the holy Bishop Patrick on the Wonders of Ireland' (edition and translation: Gwynn, 1955, pp. 56-71). The text consists of a prologue and 27 miracles. The 23rd miracle is that no serpents (*serpentes*) live in Ireland. Imported snakes die soon. Furthermore, there are neither frogs (*ranae*)[367] nor other harmful wild beasts (*ferae*), apart from the fox and the wolf (Gwynn, 1955, pp. 66-9). The poem only classifies the absence as a miracle; no explanation is given.

Bishop Patrick's Latin poem is older[368] than the extant Irish

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The text only says that serpents became innocuous.

[365] My translation deviates from that of Macalister (1932/38, p. 165) who gives 'toad' instead of 'frog' and 'rat' instead of 'mouse'.

[366] He was bishop of Dublin from 1074 to 1084 (Gwynn, 1955, p. 1).

[367] Gwynn (1955, p. 69) translates 'toads'.

[368] Kuno Meyer (1910a, p. 2) refers to the existence of Irish *mirabilia* in Latin in the 9th century. He mentions two texts: first, §76 in Mommsen's edition (1898/1961, p. 219) of Nennius's *Historia Brittonum*, and second, the poem (*ibid.*, pp. 219-22) following that text. These texts do not give the serpent miracle. Moreover, the poem — dated by Meyer about 1000 (1910a, p. 3) — is Bishop Patrick's poem. Meyer used Mommsen's edition which is incomplete (see

mirabilia, according to Aubrey Gwynn (1955, p. 127). After a comparison between the bishop's miracles and those of the Book of Ballymote (see below) Gwynn (1955, pp. 128, 130-1) maintains that Bishop Patrick versified and translated from an older Irish prose text which is no longer extant.

In sum, Pseudo-Cummian gives a variant version of the episode in VC. *Viperae* (1) on the island Iona (2) have become harmless, thanks to Columba's blessing (4). The other two relevant Hiberno-Latin texts do not use the word *viperae*, but *serpentes* (1). They describe the situation on an island (2) which is Ireland. They say nothing about the tongues of the serpents (3). There is no reference to a miracle in which their poison loses its power (4), but they mention the miraculous absence of serpents, whereby the *Mín(i)ugud* version of LGE offers an explanation. This text gives two series of absent beasts, of which the first is connected with Ireland's similarity to Paradise; the second one is a quotation from Isidore with no further explanation. The Latin *Mirabilia*-text gives one series, which is shorter than the *Mín(i)ugud* version. The *Mirabilia*-text mentions moreover that it is impossible to import snakes, which was also found in Bede's HE.

The **Middle Irish texts** which are of importance here are in close relation with two of the above-mentioned Hiberno-Latin ones. The first Irish text is connected with the Hiberno-Latin *Mín(i)ugud* text mentioned above. The Latin text is given in two manuscripts: in the Book of Lecan (23 P 2, RIA) and in Rawlinson B 512 (BLO). Thurneysen (1913, p. 6, n. 1) relates that in the latter the first part of the Latin is translated into Irish (text and translation: Stokes, 1887a, pp. xxix-xxx). The special nature of Ireland is explained: it is similar to Paradise. Ireland is in the West where the sun sets and Paradise is in the East where the sun rises and "they are alike in the nature of the soil" (*ibid.*, p. xxx, n. 1). In Paradise there are neither beast/monster (*bíast*) nor serpent (*nath(a)ir*) nor lion (*léoman*) nor dragon (*draic*) nor scorpion (*scoirp*) nor mouse (*múir*) nor toad/frog (*rána*). Ireland is likewise without any harmful animal (*anmann*), apart from the wolf (*mac tíre*).

Evidently, this is not an exact translation. First, there is an inversion: the Latin version says that there is no beast/monster in Paradise and it gives the series of absent beasts in connection with Ireland. The Irish text presents this the other way around. Second, it adds 'harmful' to the word 'animal', whereas the Latin text adds 'harmful' to the mouse. Third, the enumerated beasts in the series are identical, but they have not been put in the same order. (The quotation of Isidore is not part of the translation into Irish.)

The second Latin text belongs to the *mirabilia*, of which Irish versions also exist. The miracle concerning serpents is found in two manuscripts.

Gwynn, 1955, p. 129).

First, in the Book of Ballymote[369] (23 P 12, RIA) the text is headed *Do ingantaib Erenn andso da rer Lebair Glind Da-Lacha*, 'Of the Wonders of Eri here according to the Book of Glen-da-Locha' (Todd, 1848, pp. 192-3), and the last miracle (the 34th) is that there is neither toad/frog (*loscann*) nor snake (*nath(a)ir*) nor dragon (*draic*[370]) in Ireland (*ibid.*, pp. 218-9). When these beasts are imported[371] they immediately die, which has been tested. Apart from mice, wolves and foxes, no noxious (*aurcóitech*) animals can live on this island.

This Irish version is somewhat more extensive than Bishop Patrick's Latin *Mirabilia*: among the absent beasts, dragons are additional and among the beasts present, mice are extra. The *Mín(i)ugud* text also mentions the absence of dragons; it contradicts this text in that it says that mice are absent as well.

Second, the miracles are also to be found in H.3.17 (1336, TCD). The serpent miracle is also the last one, but in this manuscript it is the 28th. It says that neither serpent (*nath(a)ir*) nor lion (*léoman*) nor toad/frog (*loscann*) can live in Ireland. Apart from the fox (*sinnach*) and wolf (*mac tíre*) there is no venomous/dangerous beast (*píast neimnech*). Imported venomous/dangerous beasts immediately die (Todd, 1848, pp. 218-9, n. *m*).

There are a few differences: the dragons from the Book of Ballymote have become lions in H.3.17 and the order is different. H.3.17 shares with the Latin *mirabilia* the presence of wolves and foxes. The Latin and Irish *Mirabilia* versions agree on the fruitless attempts to import certain beasts, which was also found in Bede's HE (see above).

According to the texts described here, Ireland is a country without noxious beasts. In the enumerations of them the serpent is always present. I will now try to explain the presence of the beasts that accompany the snake in these series.

In the biblical texts, in which power over serpents is described, the following beasts are mentioned side by side with the snake: the serpent and the scorpion (Dt 8:15); the serpent, the lion and the dragon (Ps 90:13) and again the serpent and the scorpion (Lc 10:19). It is possible that these texts had some influence upon the mention of the dragon, lion and scorpion in the texts from Ireland.

Concerning the mouse I cannot think of an explanation, but the frog/toad might perhaps be traced back to the apocryphal *Acta Iohannis*, 'Acts of John' (third century; in circulation in Latin from the late fourth century onwards; see Knut Schäferdiek in Schneemelcher, 1904/89, pp. 139-41; translation into German: *ibid.*, pp. 155-90; into English: James,

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[369] There is a copy of the Book of Ballymote in TCD: H.2.4 (1295) from 1728 in which the *Wonders of Ireland* can be found on fol. 256a46 (Abbott, Gwynn, 1921, pp. 67-9).

[370] Todd omits the dragons (Meyer, 1910a, p. 4, n. 1).

[371] This is the only text that I have ever come across in which there is a reference to an attempt to import dragons!

1924/89, pp. 228-70[372]), in which this beast can be found in the enumeration of all kinds of poisonous beast. In the Latin versions (§20; James, 1924/89, pp. 262-3) a story is told about how John is challenged to drink a cup of poison in order to prove the truth of his God. John utters a prayer over the cup with poison, makes the sign of the cross and survives this ordeal. In the prayer the poisonous beasts are mentioned by name and said to be subject to God. This tradition is also extant in the Irish *Liber Hymnorum* (edition: Bernard, Atkinson, 1898, I, pp. 90-1; translation of the Irish: *ibid.*, II, p. 29) and was therefore known in Ireland in the 11th century or earlier (Lapidge, Sharpe, 1985, p. 142[373]). A variant version of the story is given in the preface, which is written in Latin and Irish; the prayer, entitled *Oratio S. Iohannis Evangelistae*, 'Prayer of St John the Evangelist', is in Latin only[374]. The beasts mentioned in the prayer are the dragon (*draco*), viper (*vipera*), venomous toad (*rubeta*), also called frog (*rana*), scorpion (*scorpius*), basilisk (*regulus*) and *spelagius*[375].

Thus far, texts have been described in which the absence of snakes from Ireland is 'explained' as a special quality of the island. This motif is also present in LGE, but this text gives an example of the supernatural intervention motif in addition. In LGE §§118-9 (Macalister, 1933/39, pp. 32-5) the characteristic of Ireland as an island without snakes and Irish immunity to snakes are attributed to the intervention of a person with a supernatural aspect. The Israelites have just escaped from the Egyptian Pharaoh and they pitch their tents on the banks of the Red Sea. Nél son of Fénius Farsaid[376] happens to live there too. Nél goes over to meet them and Aaron tells him about the adventures of the Israelites, the miracles of Moses and the Ten Plagues of Egypt. They become friends and Nél supplies wine and wheat. That night Góedel Glas, Nél's little son, is bitten by a poisonous snake (*nathair*). The dying boy is carried to Moses, who prays to God and lays his rod on the wound. The boy is cured. Then Moses adds a blessing/prophecy:

"Cet lem-sa, ar se,	"I command, he said[377],
do chet Día,	by the permission of God,
na ro ircoitigi nathair don mac so,	that no serpent harm this lad,
na duine día sil co brath;	or any of his seed for ever;
7 na ro aitreba nathair	and that no serpent dwell in the

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[372] A part of this text is extant in Early Modern Irish (translation: Ó hUiginn in Schneemelcher, 1904/89, pp. 191-3).

[373] The prayer may have been used in Ireland as *lorica* or protection-prayer/formula (Bernard, Atkinson, 1898, II, p. 173).

[374] There are some interesting glosses added to the prayer, to which I will return in 3.1.

[375] In James's text (1924/89, p. 263) this is the *phalangia*, 'spider'; Bernard and Atkinson (1898, II, p. 173) explain in their commentary that this is the φαλάγγιον, 'a kind of venomous fly'.

[376] For more about Nél and Fénius Farsaid, see McCone (1990, *s.v.*).

[377] Macalister omits this 'he said'.

tir bunaig a clainde.	homeland of his progeny.
Ocus bed, ol sé,	There shall be, he said,
ríga 7 ruirigh, naim 7 fireóin,	kings and lords, saints and righteous,
do sil in meic so;	of the seed of this lad;
7 bidh an indsi tuaiscert in domain	and in the northern island of the world
bias aitreb a chinigh.	shall be the dwelling of his race.
Conid edh sin fodera	This, then, is the reason why there
cen nathraaigh an Erinn,	are no serpents in Ireland,
7 cen urcoit do denam do nathair	and why no serpent does harm to any
fria duine do sil Gaidil Glais"	of the seed of Gaedel Glas"
(Macalister, 1933/39, p. 34)	(*ibid.*, p. 35).

There are two more versions of this story in LGE: a prose text in §144 (*ibid.*, pp. 58-61) where it is said that neither serpent nor poisonous beast (*píast*) can harm Góedel's descendants, followed by a poem (poem XVIII; *ibid.*, pp. 122-3), in which the boy is attacked in water by a snake and where it says that neither beast (*píast*) nor serpent with poison will be in his descendants' future land[378].

This tradition in LGE gives a combination of two motifs: the absence of serpents and the harmlessness of serpents (to certain people). It is a close parallel to VC: a holy person pronounces a blessing because of which snakes lose their danger (4). They are designated *nathracha* (1) and live on an island (2). The aspect of their remarkable tongues is absent.

Another tradition in LGE (§175) tells about a woman called Cessair granddaughter of Noah, who is the first one to take possession of Ireland after the Creation:

"Doluid Cessair íarom a	"Cessair came thereafter from the
Hindsi Meroén	Island of Meroe,
ar teched na dílend,	fleeing from the Flood:
ar ba dóig lese dú na	for she thought it probable that a
ráncatar dóini ríam cossin,	place where men had never come till then,
7 nach dérnad olc na himurbus, 7	where no evil nor sin had been committed, and
ro sáerad ar bíastaib	which was free from the monsters
7 míchuirthib in domuin,	and misbirths[379] of the world,
combad sáer in dú sin ar dílind.	that such a place should be exempt from a Flood.
Ocus ro indisetar dana a druidhi di	And her wizards, indeed, told her
Hériu fon innas sain,	that Ireland was in that case,

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[378] Macalister (1933/39, p. 134) says that this serpent episode is an interpolation.

[379] Macalister (1933/39, p. 187) translates: "the reptiles and monsters". *Michoirthe* is indeed 'a misbirth, a monster', but *bíast* is a more general term than his translation 'reptile'.

7 ara tíset co Hérinn"   and on that account she should come
                                                to Ireland"
(Macalister, 1933/39, pp. 184, 186)   (*ibid.*, pp. 185, 187).

This tradition therefore characterises Ireland as a 'paradisaical' island, although not because of the geographical 'correspondence' but because of the absence of human beings. The tradition does not explicitly say that serpents are absent, but seems to refer to the absence of dangerous and abnormal beasts/creatures. Dangerous serpents will be included in the first kind. However, because they are not explicitly mentioned, this tradition is a remote variant version of the motif.

Finally, there is an anecdote in LGE §§262 and 267 (Macalister, 1937/40, pp. 146-7, 152-5) which bears similarity to the apocryphal legend about Jeremiah concerning the dust of his grave and the snake-expelling quality of his remains. One of the explanations of the name of the Fir Bolg[380], one of the peoples who came to live in Ireland, is the story about them bringing Irish earth in bags (*bolc*) to Greece. They protected themselves in this way against venomous beasts (*píastai*) there (§262) and they sold these bags to the Greek people each year as protection against poisonous snakes and harmful beasts (*píasta*; §267). This tradition can be connected with the idea that Ireland possesses special qualities, mentioned above, especially with Bede's remarks that nearly all Irish products are effective against poison.

The motif found in LGE poem XVIII of a boy in water, attacked by a serpent and brought to a holy person who cures him supernaturally, bears strong similarity with the above-described episode in BCC (§55), although there the miracle is even greater: the man is raised from death by Colum Cille. There is a contrast in that the boy is innocent and becomes the ancestor of the Irish, whereas the man remains nameless and is pictured as being hostile to Colum Cille's preaching. In the tradition from LGE two motifs (the healing and a double anti-serpent blessing: rendering them harmless and causing their absence) are combined into one episode; in BCC each motif is described in a section of its own: the healing/raising from death in §55 and the anti-serpent blessing is found as a later development of VC II.28/III.23 in §61. The circumstances are comparable with VC: in May the saint visits monks who are ploughing in the north of Iona (in VC the west is mentioned). He tells them that he had wanted to die at Easter, but out of compassion with them he stays alive till Whitsuntide[381]. The monks become very sad and Colum Cille blesses the island:

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[380] For more about the etymology of Fir Bolg, see Carey (1988b).

[381] VC emphasises the symbolical meaning of the Sabbath (rest for Columba); here, Whitsuntide is mentioned. Whitsuntide is the feast of the Holy Spirit, often represented as a dove and, therefore, this feast is very suitable for the death date of the 'Dove of the Church'. For more about the association of Whitsuntide with events in Columba's life, see Herbert (1988, p. 284).

"Ro sháí <u>tra</u> iar sin a agad siar	"Then he turned his face westward
co ro be<u>nn</u>ach in n-innsi	and blessed this island
<u>co</u>na haittre<u>b</u>thaib	along with its inhabitants,
7 ros-indarb loscaind	and banished toads/frogs[382]
7 nat<u>hr</u>acha esti."	and snakes from it."
(Herbert, 1988, p. 240)	(*ibid.*, p. 263).

Some changes have taken place: instead of in the west Columba is in the north of the island and he looks westward instead of eastward. The snakes are designated *nathracha* (1); they live on Iona (2); nothing is said about their tongues. Instead of becoming harmless by losing the ability to poison (4) the snakes are driven out completely, together with toads/frogs. Finally, there is no condition connected with the blessing: the island is free from snakes and toads/frogs for ever.

There are thus several texts that ascribe the absence of snakes in Ireland to a special quality of this island. In the LGE tradition this is connected with the intervention of a holy person (Moses). Moreover, this tradition also refers to the harmlessness of snakes to some people. The closest parallel in texts in Irish to the episode in VC is given in BCC, as that text deals with Columba, Iona and the snakes. However, the motif of making serpents harmless has developed into banishing them (and toads/frogs).

After this survey, I will now draw some conclusions. The variant versions that are closest to the miracle in VC are the later Latin and Irish versions of Columba's *Life*: Pseudo-Cummian and BCC. They describe the situation on Iona, which is blessed by Columba before he dies. In these later versions no condition determines the blessing. Moreover, in BCC the snakes are banished (together with toads/frogs).

The special characteristic of having three-forked tongues was not found in any of the variant versions. It could be traced to Latin sources: two works by Virgil and Pliny's NH.

I have argued that the miracle that Columba here performs should be seen against the background of the biblical motif of power over serpents. Several texts were adduced in which God and Jesus grant the power over serpents to the obedient faithful. A concrete example could be found in the NT where Paul on the island of Malta was attacked but not harmed by a venomous serpent.

I have also dealt with a double variant version of this motif: the absence of serpents caused by a person with a supernatural aspect, or due to a special quality of the land. The personal interference was shown to be present in the non-canonical *Lives of the Prophets* where Jeremiah expelled beasts by his prayers, but they also stayed away from his remains. The dust of his grave could heal serpents' bites. These elements can be found again in Irish texts.

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[382] *Loscann* also means 'frog', but Herbert only translates 'toads'.

The absence of snakes in Ireland is described in LGE traditions and in *Mirabilia* texts. The LGE *Mín(i)ugud* tradition in Latin and Irish explain the absence by referring to the similarity between Ireland and Paradise. The *Mirabilia* texts do not explain the absence, but they offer the extra detail that these noxious beasts cannot be imported. Finally, a LGE tradition gives an explanation for the absence and harmlessness of snakes by relating how a holy person (Moses) blesses the ancestor of the Irish. In LGE the export of Irish earth as means of protection against poisonous beasts is also mentioned.

These traditions might be traced to the following sources. Isidore's *Etymologiae* (itself using Solinus's CRM) gives the idea that there are no serpents in Ireland. Moreover, Irish dust and pebbles are said to expel bees. Bede's HE also says that there are no serpents in Ireland. This text gives a close parallel to the *Mirabilia* texts in that it says that the noxious beasts cannot be imported. Furthermore, most of Ireland's products have a special quality, as they are effective against poison. This can be compared with the idea of the export of Irish earth as found in LGE[383].

The serpents as described in VC should be categorised as belonging to the integrated kind: the motif of power over serpents has biblical roots and the aspect of the three-forked tongues is based on classical sources.

2.3.2.5 The small ocean beasts

The fifth and last kind of monster is referred to as *terrores* and *bestiolae*. *Terror* is too general a term to serve as a guideline, which is why only *bestiola* will be focused upon here.

The **Vulgate** does not use the term *bestiola* and neither do the **non-canonical texts** give any clue.

In **Isidore's** *Etymologiae bestiola* is not found in the chapter on fish (XII.6), but it is mentioned in the one about wild beasts (XII.2). Here, a

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[383] It might be surprising that traditions about St Patrick are not mentioned in this section. This is because the texts that ascribe the absence of snakes in Ireland to this saint are late: they can be found in Latin texts from the 12th century (and in later texts): in a *Life of St Patrick* from a Cottonian manuscript, dated to the earlier part of the 12th century; in the *Life of St Patrick* by Jocelin of Furness, probably written soon after 1186; and the tradition is mentioned and refuted in *Topographia Hiberniae* by Giraldus Cambrensis in 1188 (see Bieler, 1949/64, pp. 122-4). These texts are not only late, but also beyond the scope of this study. Muirchú's *Life of St Patrick* (edition and translation: Hood, 1978, pp. 61-98; the text was written in the later 7th century; *ibid.*, p. 19) §13 refers to *caput draconis* (not found in all manuscripts), 'the head of the dragon', which will be crushed by the servant of God, but here the dragon is a metaphor of the pre-Christian religion.

small beast (*bestiola*) called *enhydros*[384] is described. It lives in water, especially in the Nile, where it enters sleeping crocodiles through their mouths. The small beast dies inside while it cuts the crocodile's entrails to pieces (XII.2.36). The small beast (1) is dangerous (3) and it lives in water (2), but that is all it has in common with Cormac's beasts.

In XII.6 there are also a few beasts described that have some affinities with VC's small monsters. The *gladius*, 'sword fish', (XII.6.15) pierces ships with its pointed mouth (7) and the *serra*, 'saw fish', (XII.6.16) cuts ships (7) with its saw-shaped crest. However, these fish are not small. The *echenais*, 'sucking fish', (XII.6.34) attaches itself to boats and is able to stop a ship. Isidore relates that this is a small (1) fish (*parvus pisciculus*), but on the other hand it differs from the *bestiolae* because it does no damage like piercing. The latter is also true of the *squatus*, 'angel fish', (XII.6.37) although it has sharp scales. The *draco marinus*, 'sea dragon', (XII.6.42) has stings (*aculei*) in its gills and is venomous. According to André (1986, p. 206, n. 389), it is small. VC uses the same word for stings, but the small beasts in VC are not said to be venomous. Then, there is the *aranea*, 'spider', (XII.6.18) which is a fish that pierces with its stings (*stimuli*); the *murix*, 'purple fish', with its sharp shell (XII.6.50) is destructive to boats (XVI.3.3); and the *echinus*, 'sea urchin', (XII.6.57) is described as *aculeata*, 'furnished with stings', and *spinis*, 'with prickles'.

André (1986, pp. 118, 191-2, 202, 206, 212, 216) gives the sources that Isidore used for his description of these beasts. A great deal of this information can be traced to sources which were (probably) also known to Adomnán: Pliny's NH (*enhydros, gladius, echenais, draco marinus, araneus*), Virgil's *Aeneid* (*murix*), Servius's commentary on the *Aeneid* (*echenais, murix*), and Ambrose's *Hexaemeron* (*echenais, echinus*). Moreover, Pliny (NH IX.LX.128) mentions another purple fish (*purpura*) that has a tongue an inch long that it uses to pierce holes in shells. He refers to the prickles of the *echinus*, 'the sea urchin', (IX.LI.100) by the words *spinae* and *aculei* (5), the latter being the term for the stings of the *bestiolae* in VC. The references to *bestiolae* in NH (XVIII.XLIV.156, and XXII.LXXXI.163; given by Lewis and Short, 1879/1991) describe small animals living on land.

It does not seem impossible to me that this kind of description has served as a background for the formation of VC's *bestiolae*. Some scholars have attempted to identify them as biological species. Reeves (1857, p. 170, n. *l*) refers to an unmentioned source according to which crustacea are said to conform to the description in VC. However, he does not give any elucidating details. Fowler (1894/1920, p. 220) quotes A.M. Norman (a letter?), who is of the opinion that the *bestiolae* are just common stinging jelly-fish. I wonder how jelly-fish can pose the threat of piercing a boat. More important is that some characteristics seem to indicate that literary motifs may be detected in this description, although Adomnán is

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[384] Isidore also mentions the *enhydris* (XII.4.21), which is a snake that lives in water (see also Pliny's NH XXXII.XXVI.82).

not explicit about this. These motifs are connected with the location of the small beasts and the stings.

As could be read above, Ambrose describes the location of the large sea monsters as beyond the bounds of the known world. Cormac travels beyond the range of human exploration. He has exceeded the bounds of human travel and is in a place from which there is no return. In 2.3.2.1 I showed the similarity between the sea monsters in the *Hexaemeron* and the large sea monster in VC. I would now like to suggest that this description by Ambrose might also have influenced the episode of the small ocean monsters. One should also note that Adomnán points out that there are other monsters there, but he leaves them further aside.

Another motif is the fact that the small monsters have stings which make them very troublesome. Adomnán indicates this by the phrase *aculeís permolestae*. This exact phrase can also be found in Isidore's work (XII.8.14), when he describes small flies — *sciniphes* — thus. (For more about this, see 3.3.2.1.) Isidore borrows this from St Eucherius of Lyon (†449). It is, however, not certain whether his *Instructionum libri II*, 'Two Books of Instruction' (edition: Wotke, 1894), were known to Adomnán[385]. Adomnán may thus have borrowed this phrase from Eucherius and/or Isidore, contrasting 'his' beasts with the *sciniphes* by saying: 'but they did not fly, they swam'. The location of the small beasts might have been taken over from Ambrose.

There are no sources or variant versions on the small ocean beasts in **Hiberno-Latin texts**. It should be noted, though, that in NBA §24 an infernal environment is located in a northern ocean. There are, however, demons and a smoky mountain instead of small beasts with other monsters.

Old and Middle Irish texts give some interesting parallels, but BCC does not contain this episode or a variant version of it. In *Epistil Ísu*, 'The Letter of Jesus', (see chapter 3) beasts with bristles (3) occur (the *brucha*), but they live on earth instead of in water and they damage vineyards instead of boats. Therefore, they are too different for them to be connected with the small ocean monsters.

Oskamp (1970, p. 37) lists the *bestiolae* among elements that stem from earlier, pre-Christian sources: "the animals that try to pierce the skins covering the boat of Cormac must be as old as the technique of skin-covering itself[386]". He is of the opinion that a similar motif is to be found in ICMD. Oskamp (*ibid.*, p. 70) mentions the giant ants and the horse-like monster that want to devour Máel Dúin, his crew and their boat. About the *bestiolae* he says: "frightful creatures try to devour the boat"

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[385] O'Loughlin (1984b, pp. 43-4, 52) found no evidence of this in *De locis sanctis*.

[386] I would like to point out that Oskamp does not take the distance between text and reality into account. Moreover, if there was a pre-Christian source, it is no longer extant.

(*ibid.*, p. 37), but this is not supported in the text. VC merely mentions that, seeking to pierce the boat the small beasts damage the boat and the blades of the oars.

Oskamp's comparison of the *bestiolae* with the monsters from ICMD is inaccurate. One of the remarkable elements in this *immram* is that all its monsters are living on land (on one occasion in a land under a sea like a cloud; ICMD §23) and that Máel Dúin and his companions are never threatened by monsters on sea (compare also ICMD §22: the crystal green sea where they see no beast whatsoever in the clear water, only gravel and sand). In general, being threatened by monsters during a sea voyage is of course similar, but further than this the parallel does not hold.

The parallel to which he refers[387] thereafter is a justified one: ICUC. As described above (1.3.2), the voyagers see miraculous phenomena, including a fiery sea serving as an infernal environment. The episode that is parallel to the one in VC happens in this fiery sea (§66), which is full of human heads dashing against each other. One of the voyagers deduces that they are seeing an abode of death. As if to confirm this their boat is attacked: *píasta*, 'beasts, monsters[388]', pierce one of the two lower hides of the boat's covering[389]. There is a *sruith*, 'elder, sage', on board, who comments upon this adventure that God is able to save them even in a boat with one hide. The monsters may want to kill the voyagers, but they cannot go against God's will. With these remarks the danger seems to be averted and they go on to their next adventure.

The extant text of ICUC from the 11th century gives a variant version of the episode in VC. There are some differences and similarities. The monsters are named *bestia* in both texts, although in VC it is a diminutive and in ICUC the Irish equivalent is given (1). Cormac is somewhere far away in the North (2); the Uí Chorra are in an infernal region. The extensive description of the hideousness and extreme danger of the small beasts (3) is absent in ICUC. Cormac's beasts are small, having the size of frogs (4), whereas nothing is said of the size of the monsters in ICUC. Nothing is said about stings (5) in ICUC, but the fact that they are able to pierce one of the hides indicates that they must have stings or something similar. In both texts a boat is attacked by monsters that try to pierce it (7). Cormac's sea is full of small beasts and other monsters (8); the Uí Chorra's sea is fiery, full of human heads and there are monsters. Cormac's company has a difficult time and the whole community of Iona, including Columba, has to come into action to pray their way out of this mortal danger. Things are considerably easier for the Uí Chorra: the elder's expression of trust in God neutralises the danger.

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[387] Unfortunately, Oskamp (1970, p. 70) describes this — also a bit too rashly — as "exactly the same" as the incident in VC.

[388] Stokes (1893, p. 55) translates this with 'worms'. Oskamp (1970, p. 70, n. 47) repeats this, commenting: "These 'worms' may be just 'worms', or sea-serpents or -dragons".

[389] The total number of hides is three.

This leaves one point for attention. In NBA the northern ocean is the setting of an infernal scene. The variant version of VC's episode in ICUC gives no reference to the North; the adventure takes place in an infernal sea. There is one phrase in VC that might indicate something similar: Adomnán says that the beasts 'have never been seen before'. He might emphasise with this phrase how extraordinary Cormac's adventure is: he encounters a great danger because of these strange beasts and thanks to Columba he returns from a place from which there would otherwise have been no return. There may also be another meaning in this phrase. I am now getting ahead of my story, but I will show in chapter 3 (3.3.2.5) that the phrase is used to characterise monsters from Hell. If we add this fact to the northern Hell in NBA and the infernal sea in ICUC, we see that Adomnán may have hinted at an infernal environment — beyond human bounds from which there is no return. However, he is not explicit about this. If he did mean this, he was extremely subtle.

Summarising the above, there is one text in Irish (ICUC) that offers a variant version on the episode about the *bestiolae* in VC. For the description of the small beasts Adomnán may have used sources like Ambrose's *Hexaemeron* (the location of the beasts) and Eucherius and/or Isidore (their very troublesome stings). The extreme danger that the monsters present is underlined by the mention of Cormac, who is with his companions far away where no people go and from where there is no return. The phrase that the small beasts have never been seen before and the fact that they are in a northern ocean might indicate that Adomnán had an infernal setting in mind. However, this is not made explicit in VC. The small ocean monsters are, therefore, monsters of the integration kind: Adomnán used sources but adapted them in his description of another impressive miracle by Columba.

2.3.3 The monsters' relation to evil

The monsters in VC are all part of the dangers human beings may encounter in nature, or from a hagiographical point of view: in God's creation. This kind of evil is classified in this study as non-moral evil. The huge sea monster might be viewed as an extrapolation of reality; for instance, the Bible refers to the dangers of the sea and Ambrose describes the fear that sailors experience when they see immense sea monsters. This may very well go back to sightings of large sea creatures. However, Adomnán adds an extra dimension to 'ordinary' reality in his story. First, he refers to the beast in terms that may have a mythical aspect: *cetus* and *belua* (instead of, for instance, *ballaena*). Second, to the 'fact from natural history' that sea monsters surface periodically — described by Pliny in his NH — Adomnán adds a supernatural aspect: Columba knows in advance where and when the sea monster will surface (and how different human beings will react to that). Finally, the disappearing of the beast is brought about in a supernatural way (see 2.3.4).

The non-moral evil that the sea monster represents is, however, connected with moral evil. As well as showing Columba's miraculous

prescience, the episode also presents a contrast between two monks. The first one, Berach, is used as a bad example. Berach is disobedient: he does not follow his abbot's advice to make a detour. The price he has to pay for his behaviour has also been predicted. He is overcome by great terror (*perterritus*) and has difficulty in escaping from the danger. The good example is given by Baíthéne, who is Columba's foster-son (III.18) and who succeeds Columba as abbot after the latter's death. Baíthéne is informed about the danger which awaits, but nothing is said about the detour. The pious monk sets out on the journey and Adomnán shows that for those who trust in God no real dangers exist. Contrasted with Berach's *perterritus* is Baíthéne's *intrepidus*. The sea monster, representing non-moral evil, is thus used as an example to show moral evil (disobedience, disbelief) and moral good (belief, trust).

The wild boar belongs to the dangers of the wood, again a form of non-moral evil. However, the beast is not just a normal danger: it is extraordinarily great. The question arises as to why this monster is the only one which has to die in VC, which is a moral question. However, because this concerns the overcoming of the danger it will be dealt with in 2.3.4.

The danger of the waters is, for the second time, the subject of a miracle; the first time it was the sea that was the scene of action and now it is a river. The monster in the river Ness is apparently very dangerous as it has just killed a man. In the forest, Columba was alone during the encounter; now there is a public present[390], which consists of two groups. First, there are the inhabitants of the region, the Picts with their own religion, who are burying the dead man. Second, there are the monks, belonging to the Christian religion, who are voyaging with Columba abroad. The acts of the Picts make the danger explicit but Columba ignores this, desiring one of his company to go into the water. Once more, a monk serves as a good example: Lugne obeys, putting his trust in his abbot. Before the public's very eyes the scene becomes breathtaking and Columba makes a profound impression on his audience when he protects his monk. This results in the two different groups of the public magnifying the God of the Christians together. If it is true that Adomnán used this episode from the *Dialogues* as a model (see above, 2.3.2.3), examination of the differences between these two texts could shed some light on the 'message' of the author. What strikes one immediately is that the episode in VC is much more extensive and dramatic. In the *Dialogues* the story is written in the first person plural and it is said that these 'insiders' are amazed. St Martin sighs and sounds somewhat disappointed whereas God is glorified in St Columba by the 'insiders' (the brothers). Adomnán adds a missionary aspect to the tale by his description of the reaction of the 'outsiders' (the Picts): they are "impelled by the magnitude of this miracle (*eiusdem miraculi magnitudine*) that they themselves had seen" (Anderson, 1961/91,

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[390] Compare also how Columba exposes the rustic evil-doer on purpose in public (II.17).

pp. 134-5). Therefore, if it is the case that Adomnán followed Sulpicius Severus in his story about this river monster he emphasised the miracle by adding several aspects that made it even more miraculous and its result even more impressive. One of these aspects is the mention of Picts, with whom the tale starts and ends. It follows a climactic line: the story starts with the burial of the dead Pict and ends with the magnification of the God of the Christians by the living Picts. The message of this episode is clear: the God of the Christians and the saint have a superior power, of which anybody can receive the life-giving effects, provided that one puts one's trust in this divinity and the representative. Therefore, moral good is shown with the aid of non-moral evil. Moral good is here the obedience and trust of the monk. Non-moral evil is the danger that the monster forms with its destructive acts and threatening behaviour.

After a sea, a forest on another island, a river abroad in Pictland, now Columba's own island becomes the subject. Again, non-moral evil is linked with moral good and evil. As compensation for the loss of his presence Columba blesses the island, because of which non-moral evil loses its danger. The blessing is connected with moral good: observing the commandments of Christ. As soon as one starts committing moral evil, non-moral evil regains its power.

Finally, the last form of non-moral evil is to be found in an ocean, a third form of the dangers of the waters. This time it is not a sea in the neighbourhood but an ocean far in the North, where nobody comes and from which there is no return. This episode seems to be an example of solidarity between different groups of monks. Columba commands his brothers to pray for Cormac and his company in a special way: they have to identify with the party in danger. Columba says: "In our minds, therefore, we must share the sufferings of our brothers, our fellow-members, who are placed in unendurable danger; and we must pray to the Lord with them" (Anderson, 1961/91, p. 169). Just as Cormac and his company are crying and praying, so too are Columba and his community. Therefore, this is again an episode in which, apart from Columba's miracle-working power, moral good is demonstrated: solidarity between two different groups of monastics.

The monsters in VC do not represent moral evil, although Adomnán had some precedents for doing so. As mentioned earlier (2.3.2.1), in the *Physiologus* (and perhaps also in NBA in the case of Jasconius) a sea monster represents a dimension of moral evil. The serpent is, in the Bible, the symbol *par excellence* of moral evil. However, Adomnán did not make use of this kind of symbolism.

Adomnán shows moral evil most clearly in the encounters with Columba's enemies, both human and supernatural. Moral evil represented by the concept of 'sin' is of course important throughout the whole *Life*. However, the way it appears in encounters is most interesting to this study, which is why the analysis has been limited to this form. There are three groups who perform evil deeds in this kind of episode: 'ordinary' evildoers; (Pictish) druids and the powers from Hell: the Devil and demons. Four themes are central in these encounters. First, in the **competition with**

the Christian religion Pictish druids play a leading part. They want to prevent the singing of divine praise, because they do not want their people to hear it (I.37). They mock and reproach a Pictish family which has recently converted to Christianity when their child dies, which they consider as proof of the superiority of their Gods (II.32). The druid Broichan, who nearly dies because he refuses Columba a request (II.33), wants to prevent Columba's departure with magic wind and mist (II.34). Finally, there is the (Irish?) rustic evil-doer who — challenged by Columba — nearly kills a bull by milking him (II.17). In the case of these last two instances it is explicitly said (in II.34 by Adomnán; in II.17 by Columba) that these arts are performed because of demonic power.

Second, **the cause of some diseases** is related to the forces of evil. The sickening well (II.11) is venerated by the Picts under the influence of the Devil. The water is inhabited by demons. With subtlety Adomnán connects this devilish well with the druids by describing them as being glad when they find out that Columba heads for the source. Finally, the demons with whom Columba fights bring pestilential diseases (III.8). It is important to note that even if demons cause a certain thing, Adomnán gives an assurance that this happens with God's permission (see for instance, II.34). There is, therefore, no extreme dualism.

Third, there are **attacks on Columba's protégé(e)s**, which is equal to **showing disrespect to Columba**. When a friend of Columba is repeatedly robbed, Columba's protest is answered by scorn and mockery. The moral evil that this marauder performs is characterised by Columba as 'to despise Christ in his servants'. This is punished with death and Hell (II.22). An exile is killed and the murder, committed by the man who promised protection, is called 'a lie against God' (II.23). The punishment is again death and Hell. Then there is the evil-doer who, prompted by the Devil, wants to slay Columba, but aims at one of his monks wearing the saint's cowl. A year later the piercer is himself pierced (II.24). Finally, the cruel evil-doer who kills the girl under the robes of Gemmán and Columba did not show any reverence to them (II.25). He is sentenced to death and Hell.

Fourth, there are the **cosmic combats to decide the destiny of souls**[391] between the forces of evil (demons) and the forces of good (angels and other souls; III.6; III.10 and III.13).

In sum, the acts of both the 'ordinary' evil-doers and the druids are sometimes said to be inspired by demons or the Devil: the personifications of moral evil. Although the Devil is sometimes indicated as 'the organising principle' (in the cases of the veneration of the well and the failed attempt to murder Columba) there is no direct encounter with this head of the forces of evil to be found in VC. Furthermore, only between these hellish powers and human beings is a link established. There is no affiliation between the monsters and the personifications of moral evil.

Jean-Michel Picard (1981, pp. 93-4) compares the phenomenon of the

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[391] Compare also, for instance, I.35 in which a man after his death is dragged to Hell by demons without a cosmic combat.

Devil in Merovingian Gaulish and Irish hagiography. In the former there seems to be a much stronger tendency to ascribe misfortune and illness to the Devil's work. Human evil-doers are considered to be manifestations (or in Picard's terms: avatars) of the Devil. The Devil is omnipresent both in natural and supernatural form. In Irish hagiography evil-doers are nothing more or less than human beings (*ibid.*, p. 93). Picard (*ibid.*) says that druids play an important part as representatives of evil; sorcerers and people serving Gods other than the God of the Christians are present in continental hagiography too, but do not receive so much emphasis. The power of the druids serves evil; the power of the saint is in the service of good (cp. also above, 2.2: the opposition between life-giving supernatural art, represented by Columba and death-bringing supernatural art, represented by the druids). The theme of a contest between the representatives of the two different religious systems is often used, especially in texts related to Patrick. Finally, Picard draws the conclusion that in continental *Lives* the Devil appears in both human and animal forms. In Irish hagiography this element is absent: "even when an animal is a monster, it is not featured as an avatar of the Devil" (*ibid.*). This analysis of the monsters is in conformity with what has been written above: the monsters in VC represent non-moral evil, although a certain connection with moral evil can be made.

2.3.4 The way in which the monsters are overcome

The danger that the sea monster presents is always imminent, but implicit and invisible: the terrifying beast lives in the depths of the sea, which is sailed by human beings. If the monster surfaces, the danger becomes explicit. When it swims visibly with its gaping jaws, showing its teeth, it frightens Brother Berach and his company immensely. Because of the open mouth they will have feared to be devoured; because of the high waves, they will have feared drowning. Berach and the other voyagers escape from this danger with great difficulty.

The monster, however, is still present; the danger has only been temporarily averted. The next group of voyagers sees the beast from a great distance. This company reacts in the same way as the first. They are terrified. It is only the pious Baíthéne who remains calm, in accordance with what he said before the journey: both the monster and he are in God's hands. Columba has told him what his means of protection will be: his faith[392] in Jesus Christ. Eye to eye with the monster he performs a ritual,

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[392] Compare this with Ambrose's advice in *Hexaemeron* V.10.31. He warns of the dangers in the sea and enumerates several dangerous beasts (for instance, the *echineis*, *gladius*, *serra* and *balaena*). He advises his audience to be armed with the arms of faith (*arma fidei*) and the shield of devotion (*scutum devotionis*) hoping for the assistance in deliverance by 'your' Lord. This probably goes back to Eph 6:11-17, where the readers are admonished to wear God's armour in order to fight the non-material diabolical forces: the princes, powers and rulers of the world of darkness and the evil celestial spirits (Eph 6:12). Several virtues are

characteristic for saints: he raises his hands and blesses both beast and sea. Earlier in Book I (I.5) another man is in danger at sea: St Colmán[393]. Columba makes a pronouncement on this holy man, who is in trouble at the 'cauldron of Breccán[394]':

"'Columbanus filius Beognai	"'Colmán, Beogna's son,
ad nos transnauigare incipiens	has begun to sail over to us,
nunc in undosís carubdis Brecani	and is now in great danger in the
aestibus ualde periclitatur;	surging tides of the whirlpool of Brecán;
ambasque ad caelum in prora sedens	and sitting in the prow he raises both
palmas eleuat,	hands to heaven,
turbatum quoque et tam formidabile	and blesses the troubled and very
pilagus benedicit'"	terrible sea'"
(Anderson, 1961/91, p. 28)	(*ibid.*, p. 29).

Smiling, Columba comments that the Lord terrifies Colmán thus to "rouse him to more fervent prayer that with God's favour he may reach us after passing through the danger" (*ibid.*, p. 29). The blessing of the sea combined with prayer is thus an example given earlier in VC of the way to overcome aquatic dangers. Colmán is terrified, whereas Baíthéne remains calm. This can be explained by the fact that the latter has received information and assurance from Columba. Colmán is called a saint in the heading of I.5, which could be an indication that not everybody is capable of overcoming dangers like this. It should be noted that Baíthéne is also called a saint in VC (I.37) and, as said above, he is Columba's foster-son and successor (I.2), which could perhaps be seen as further signs of his holiness. The text does not say whether Baíthéne also speaks words of power. Perhaps it is only a pious mentality and a sacral gesture that 'do the trick'.

The danger is not overcome, but neutralised. The monster returns to the place where it came from[395]: the depths of the sea — where it belongs according to God's plan of creation. The monster goes on existing 'under the surface', but an example is now given of how to survive when faced with this danger: faith and a sacral gesture.

enumerated as parts of the armour, among which the *lorica justitiae*, 'the breastplate of righteousness' (Eph 6:14). These virtues should be combined with many prayers (Eph 6:18). However, Ambrose advises these means as protection against material dangers: the beasts in the sea. In VC it is shown that the 'arms of faith' are indeed effective against this kind of danger.

[393] Colmán mocu Sailni, son of Beogne is the same as Colmán Elo of Lynally, whose death date is 26 September (according to FO) in 610 (according to AU; Anderson, 1961/91, pp. 28, 245).

[394] This dangerous whirlpool is also mentioned above, see I.3.2.

[395] This cyclical element is also to be found in other hagiographical texts, for instance, in NBA §16: after the fight the defending monster returns to where it came from.

The danger of the sea monster is neutralised by a monk who is also called a saint; the rest of VC's monsters have to deal with St Columba himself. Columba wants peace and quiet to pray, but he is disturbed by an onrushing wild boar. Just like Baíthéne, Columba remains calm. From a distance, remaining in his place, he watches the beast. Then he performs a sacral act: he raises his hand, he invokes God and prays intently. He speaks words of power, which give the impression of a magic formula. Because of this sequence of words accompanied by the gesture, the invocation of God and the prayer the wild boar stops and falls down dead.

Therefore, this danger is overcome. The episode raises a question: why should this beast die? When Irish saints encounter monsters, they usually[396] render them harmless. The danger is subdued with a sacral word and gesture and the beast may receive the command never to do harm anymore. Columba deviates from this and the episode — especially because of his *terribile verbum*, 'terrible word', — is reminiscent of the preceding sections in which he gets even with his enemies (II.22-25; in II.22 he speaks *formidabilia valde verba*, 'very terrible words'). Perhaps Adomnán wants to show here that vengefulness and extreme anger are part of Columba's character.

There is also another possibility. The wild boar is the only monster that threatens Columba himself; the other monsters threaten monks and/or lay people. Did the wild boar go too far by attacking God's holy man? If we compare this with the preceding cluster on evil-doers, another aspect is striking. All evil-doers attack Columba's protégés (one of them thinks that he is aiming at the saint himself). By doing this they violate Columba's honour, according to the native Irish view[397]. This is explicitly stated in the text. First, the violence is rejected, but second, the disrespect towards Columba/Christ/God is mentioned: "This wretched mortal, who has despised Christ in his servants (...)" (II.22; Anderson, 1961/91, p. 125); "That unhappy being has lied not to me, but to God (...)" (II.23; Anderson, 1961/91, p. 127) and about the act of the cruel man "showing them (Gemmán and Columba, JB) no reverence" Gemmán says: "For how long, holy boy, Columba, will God, the just judge, suffer this crime, and *our dishonour*, to go unavenged[398]?" (II.25; Anderson, 1961/91, p. 131;

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[396] There are, of course, exceptions, for instance: St Senán in *p*AS is said to slay the monster and the attacking monster in NBA §16 is killed by the defending monster.

[397] Compare also 1.2: the killing of the exile (Eochu Bélbuide) is the violation of the protection offered by the king (Fergus mac Leite).

[398] The Latin text reads: "*'Quanto'*, ait, *'sancte puer Columba hoc scelus cum nostra dehonoratione temporis spatio inultum fieri iudex iustus patietur deus?'*" (Anderson, 1961/91, p. 130). This could be compared with Apc 6:10, in which the souls of the people murdered as martyrs for the sake of their religion cry out: "*usquequo Domine sanctus et verus non iudicas et vindicas sanguinem nostrum de his qui habitant in terra*", 'How long, o Lord, (you) who are holy and true, do you not judge and avenge our blood upon those who live on earth?'. It should be noted that the biblical verse is also a cry for justice, but dishonour is not mentio-

italics mine, JB). In II.24 there is no reference to disrepect or dishonour, but this might be explained by the fact that in this episode someone tries to kill Columba himself. The outrageous character of this act is possibly stressed by this being the only crime in VC prompted by the Devil (the veneration of the well in II.11 is called a 'delusion' by the Devil). All evil-doers in this cluster are punished with death, just like the wild boar in the cluster about beasts. The message is clear: a saint like Columba should be treated with awe and respect. Finally, the wild boar attacks when Columba is alone and wants to pray. This image returns in III.8 in a kind of climax[399]: the solitary Columba wants to pray in a wild place (*saltus*) far from humankind and is there attacked by hordes of demons. As mentioned above, angels have to come to his aid[400].

The river monster is expelled. Therefore, this danger is neutralised instead of overcome. The beast could return. According to the heading of II.27 the monster is driven away by Columba's prayer; in the episode itself he raises his hand, invokes God's name and commands the monster with a formula of the same type as the wild boar. But these words of power are not as destructive: the beast has to stop, to refrain from touching the man and to turn back fast. This happens: the action is reversed. The monster that approached very fast also returns very quickly. Now the beast is *tremefacta*, 'trembling'. The river is (temporarily) safe and, as described above, Columba impresses the people present, both Christian monks and Pictish inhabitants.

The danger that the serpents present is (temporarily) overcome. In the summer on the western plain of Iona standing on higher ground, Columba raises both his holy hands and blesses the complete island, because of which the serpents' poison loses its power on condition that the inhabitants obey Christ's commandments (II.28). This happens in the month of May in III.23. In this section Columba remains seated during the blessing, looking to the East (the direction of the greater part of Iona, as he is situated in the west). Furthermore, Adomnán relates that 'till the present day' the poison has not hurt anybody. This miracle is in accordance with a biblical line of thought: power over serpents is given to those who believe in God/Christ and obey the commandments.

The danger posed by the small beasts and monsters in the ocean is avoided. In reaction to the danger Cormac and his fellow-sailors start

ned.

[399] Compare also III.16, where Columba retreats to pray on his own on the western plain of Iona. A spy observes how he has a conference with angels. In the same chapter it is told that Columba was often visited by angels when he was awake during winter nights or prayed in remote places.

[400] Compare this with the episode in Mt 4:1-11 and Lc 4:1-13, where Jesus withdraws to the desert (*desertus*) to fast and three encounters with the Devil take place. In Mc 1:12-13 the text just says that the Spirit expels him into the desert, where he remains for forty days and nights and is tempted by Satan. In Mt and Mc, Jesus is served by angels afterwards. (See also 3.3.2.4 *sub* the Vulgate, and 3.3.3.)

praying with tears to God, "the true and ready helper in times of need"
(Anderson, 1961/91, p. 169). But this is not sufficient. In the oratory on
Iona, Columba and his community have to join in the prayer and (mental-
ly) in the suffering. Columba tells his brothers to pray to Christ that the
southern wind changes into a northern wind. Consequently, the saint prays
to "the omnipotence of God, which controls the winds and all things"
(*ibid.*, p. 171). The wind does indeed change and brings the 'fellow-
members' back to safer regions. If the phrase that these small monsters
'have never been seen before' means that they are located in infernal
regions, then it is logical that this danger cannot be overcome. One should
escape the danger that Hell presents, as it is only at the End of Time that
this danger will be overcome (see Apc 20:14). However, it is not certain
whether Adomnán had this in mind. In the ocean in the far North, where
nobody goes and from which there is no return, there are still small beasts
with dangerous stings as well as other monsters.

VC gives a clear message about what should be done in case of dangers:
trust and belief in God will save those who are in peril. It seems as if this
is a prerogative of saints: they conquer the dangers that monsters present
by praying, blessing, raising hands, invoking God's name and uttering
commands. But hagiographies were not only written as a form of adoration
of a saint; they are also meant as an example to follow. The message for
people who are not as holy as saints seems to be a double one. First, they
can turn to saints for help. This is shown not only by the miracles taking
place during Columba's life, of which the monster episodes are good
examples, but also by the posthumous miracles of Columba: his holiness
protects his followers from drought, illnesses and other dangers (see 2.2).
Second, another message that is given is advice about how people should
live. This is explicitly found in the episodes connected with Columba's
approaching death. First, while blessing the island, he tells that Christ's
commandments should be followed. Second, he repeats this message in his
last words: follow the divine commandments and Columba will intercede
for the obedient, who will receive a good life on earth and a welcome in
Heaven from God.

Summary and conclusions

In VC, a Latin hagiographical text from about 700, five kinds of monster
are to be found: an enormous sea monster (*cetus, bilua*) with many teeth
located in the sea between Iona and Tiree; a huge wild boar (*aper, ferus*)
in a dense wood on Skye; a savage, roaring, fast water monster (*aquatilis
bestia, bilua*) in the river Ness in Scotland; serpents (*viperae*) with three-
forked tongues on Iona, and small swimming beasts (*bestiolae*) with
dangerous stings accompanied by other monsters in an ocean in the North.
    The sea monster is one of the miraculous inhabitants of the sea,
mentioned in the Vulgate. The image of a mountain, with which it is
compared, can be traced back to Isidore's description of sea monsters in
his *Etymologiae*. His source, St Ambrose's *Hexaemeron*, was perhaps also

known to and used by Adomnán. The phrase '*instar montis*' may have
been taken over from Virgil's *Aeneid*. The usual dwelling-place of a large
sea monster is the deep, from which it regularly surfaces. This information
is given by Pliny and Ambrose. In the Vulgate, the deep and Jonah's sea
monster have a mythological aspect as the abode of the dead, the Under-
world, or Hell. But there is no sign that Adomnán had this symbolism in
mind: he seems to use the aspect of the deep as a fact from 'natural
history', such as found in Pliny (who also mentions a sea monster with
many teeth). This 'natural history' should of course be seen in the light of
the idea of the world as God's creation, as found in the Bible and the
Hexaemeron. There are a few variant versions of a sea monster frightening
monks in a boat in Latin texts (VG, NBA). The sea monster is categorised
as a monster of the integration kind. It should be seen against the back-
ground of biblical ideas. Moreover, Adomnán seems to be inspired by the
works of Virgil, Pliny, Isidore and Ambrose, and adapts certain elements
to his hagiographical framework.

There are no predecessors of the wild boar in canonical and non-
canonical scripture, nor in Isidore's *Etymologiae*. Pseudo-Cummian gives a
Hiberno-Latin variant version, which is an abridged version of the episode
in VC. It is probable that Adomnán knew stories about encounters with
wild boars from classical literature, but the extant texts do not allow the
identification of one of them as a specific source. Middle Irish texts also
describe many adventures with wild boars, and it is not inconceivable that
this motif belonged to the traditional lore of early Ireland. However, the
patterns in the wild boar stories both in classical and Fenian texts are
heroic. If Adomnán was inspired by them, he adapted this to his
hagiographical aims: no weapons and no blood are found in this miracle.
The way Columba kills the wild boar — with sacred signs and words of
power — is superior. This monster is probably another example of the
integrated kind, although the sources are no longer precisely identifiable.

It is highly probable that the episode in which the river monster is
described has been modelled after a section from the *Dialogues* by
Sulpicius Severus. It was the Irish version of the *Life of Columba* that gave
rise to the identification of this possible source: in BCC an adventure with
a water snake takes place. This is the same beast that figures in the
adventure of St Martin. It is obvious that the episode in the *Dialogues* was
only a starting point for Adomnán. The miracle that Columba performs in
VC is more extensively described, with many details added. Water mon-
sters with similar characteristics can be found in some Hiberno-Latin texts,
but there are even more resemblances in Old and Middle Irish texts. It
seems justifiable to conclude that this kind of monster appealed to the Irish
imagination, considering the great number of variant versions. As a
continental source is considered to be the basis of the episode in VC, the
river monster should be categorised as belonging to the integrated kind.

The power of Columba over snakes should be seen against the biblical
background in which God or Jesus bestows this power upon those who
serve them (although it should be noted that banishing serpents is a motif
which is not limited to Christianity). One apocryphal text (*Lives of the*

Prophets) combines the expulsion of snakes by a holy person with similar properties of his remains and the curative quality of the dust of his grave. In the third century Ireland is described as an island with no snakes (Solinus). Later on other details adorn this statement, for instance Irish products that are used against poison (Bede, the Fir Bolg section in LGE) and other beasts that are also absent in Ireland (LGE, *Mirabilia*; some of them perhaps based upon the Vulgate and the apocryphal prayer of St John). The three-forked tongues of Iona's vipers can be traced to older Latin sources written by Virgil and Pliny. Closest to VC are the variant versions given in Pseudo-Cummian and BCC. The episode in BCC offers a development from rendering serpents harmless to banishing them. Also of interest is the episode in LGE, in which an ancestor of the Irish is blessed by Moses, because of which both land and offspring will be immune to serpents. The serpents belong to the integration kind of monster: the aspect of their three-forked tongues comes from classical sources and the idea that a supernatural person has power over them is found in several places in the Vulgate.

There are no predecessors of the small beasts in the Vulgate, but there are beasts with similar aspects in Pliny's NH and Isidore's *Etymologiae*, although not one of them can be identified as the same as those from VC. Eucherius and Isidore describe flying beasts as *aculeis permolestae*, 'very troublesome because of (their) stings', a characteristic that Adomnán applies to the small ocean monsters. In Hiberno-Latin texts there seems to be no trace of this kind of monster. The Middle Irish ICUC offers a variant version: monsters in a fiery infernal sea try to pierce a boat. There are some aspects in VC that also might refer to an infernal environment: the location of the ocean in the North, a place beyond the human borders from which there is no return, and the characterisation of the beasts as never having been seen before. But this mythological dimension is not explicit in Adomnán's description. Therefore, we cannot draw this conclusion about the episode in VC. The location of the small beasts may have been taken over from Ambrose's *Hexaemeron*, who locates the large sea monsters in such a faraway place, strange to human beings. The use of the works of Isidore and perhaps Ambrose and Eucherius show that the small ocean monsters should be categorised as belonging to the integrated kind.

All monsters represent non-moral evil. There is no link with the personification of moral evil: the Devil and demons. This connection does exist between the forces of moral evil and some human beings. Adomnán uses the monsters to show what is morally good and bad behaviour: disobedience and piety, trust (sea monster); trust and a demonstration of the superior power of the Christian religion (the river monster); obedience to Christ's commandments (serpents) and solidarity between different communities of monks (small beasts). In the case of the wild boar, which is somewhat different, the message might be that one should have the highest respect for saints. The moralism present in the *Physiologus*, in which the sea monster is taken as a symbol for the Devil, is not found in VC. Nor is there a reference to the role that the serpent plays in the Bible in the episode about the serpents on Iona. It could be a subtle choice of

Adomnán to take serpents that are made harmless by obeying Christ's commandments, as it is a serpent that shows the way to transgress a divine commandment in the Bible. But again, this is not made explicit.

All monster episodes seem to convey this message: when one is in danger one should trust God and/or the saint, because of which the danger will be overcome. The first monster is faced by Columba's future successor; the other four by Columba himself. The danger of the sea monster is neutralised by faith and a blessing. The danger of the wild boar is overcome by hand-raising, the invocation of God's name, a prayer and a command/formula. The danger of the river monster is neutralised by hand-raising, the invocation of God's name and a command/formula. The danger of the snakes is temporarily overcome by hand-raising and a blessing on condition that Christ's commandments are obeyed. The danger of the small beasts (and monsters) is avoided: by prayer, tears and solidarity the wind changes, making escape possible. It is only the wild boar that dies; probably because it attacked the saint himself.

The world view in VC is that God rules over everything. The people should follow the divine commandments and follow the examples and advice of the saint. Columba's last words refer to the biblical idea of God's blessing: those who will follow the divine commandments will fare well, both during and after this life. This has a counterpart in God's curse: transgression of the divine commandments will be punished. In the posthumous miracle when a drought was averted Adomnán refers to God's curse, which he links to the transgressions of the people. The plagues that occur in Adomnán's time are connected with good or bad behaviour. The ideas about God's blessing and curse are even more predominant in the text that is central to the third chapter of this study, where they will receive extensive attention.

3. *Epistil Ísu*,
'The Letter of Jesus'

Introduction

Epistil Ísu[401] (EÍ) is the third text to be discussed in this study and its monsters analysed. It was written in Irish; its language belongs to the Old Irish period (O'Keeffe, 1905, p. 190). The text is dated to the early 9th century (Kenney, 1929/79, p. 477[402]). Its context and classification will be treated (3.1); a summary will be given (3.2) and the monsters in the text analysed (3.3). First, the monsters' characteristics will be described (3.3.1). Then a survey will be given of both the sources that may have influenced the monsters' description and the variant versions of these that are extant (3.3.2). Subsequently, an analysis of the evil that the monsters represent will follow (3.3.3) and finally, the way in which this evil is neutralised or overcome will be examined (3.3.4).

3.1 Context and classification of the text

Epistil Ísu is the Irish version of the Sunday Letter[403], a text popular in a

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[401] The text was edited and translated by O'Keeffe (1905). For a more recent translation of the first part of the text (O'Keeffe's §§1-18), see Herbert, McNamara (1989, pp. 50-4; see also p. 176). The manuscripts that O'Keeffe used for his edition are: LB = 23 P 16 (1230), RIA, pp. 202b24-204b, 15th century; Harl 5280, BL, fo. 36a-39a, 16th century; 23 N 10 (967), RIA, p. 103 contains a part of the Letter; YBL = H 2.16 (1318), TCD, cols. 217-221 (facs. pp. 405-407a7) and cols. 957-958 (facs. p. 215a12-215b42) 14th to 15th century. Manuscripts not used by O'Keeffe are: LFF = 23 O 48 (476), RIA, vol. II, fo. 34 (45)v, 15th century, which contains a small fragment of the Letter; Additional 4783, BL, fol. 5v-6v; 24 P 25 (475), RIA, fol. 57(107)rb, 16th century. McNamara (1975, p. 60) also mentions a variant version of EÍ in R 73, St Patrick's College, Maynooth, pp. 259-68, but this is a Modern Irish text (I am indebted to Gearóid Mac Eoin who pointed this out to me), therefore outside this study's scope. For an earlier publication of mine on the Irish Sunday Letter, see Borsje (1994b).

[402] For a discussion about the date, see appendix I.

[403] This text is designated in several ways in the literature: *C(h)arta Dominica*, 'Letter of the Lord', the Letter of Christ, the Heavenly Letter and the Sunday Letter. I prefer this last designation because the other ones may refer to completely different texts. There is, for instance, a letter from Christ to Abgar (James, 1924/89, pp. 476-7; for an edition and translation of Irish versions, see Considine, 1973, pp. 246-50, 253-4, and also Herbert, McNamara, 1989, pp. 48-9; translation only) and there are many examples of Heavenly Letters (for a survey,

large area (from Ethiopia to Iceland) over a long period (from the 6th until
the early 20th century) and extant in many languages. The Letter's main
subject is the inculcation of Sunday observance. It purports to be written
by Jesus Christ in Heaven.

Usually the Letter proper is framed by a prologue, which consists of an
account of the miraculous way in which the Letter came to earth and was
found[404], and by an epilogue containing a testimonial to its genuineness
and an admonition to read and copy the Letter and spread its message.
That message is clear: those celebrating Sunday in a proper way will
receive rewards on earth and be admitted to Heaven after death. All kinds
of punishment — both on earth and in Hell — await those who transgress
the command. This is where the monsters come in, since they will execute
some of the punishments. In the epilogue, the Letter sometimes receives a
kind of talismanic function: carrying the Letter on one's person will avert
all kinds of danger[405]. Disbelief and not spreading the Letter's message
and copies of it will, however, be punished. In this epilogue, punishment
takes the form of a general curse whereas the Letter proper enumerates
specific punishments for those who do not observe Sunday.

The original language of the Letter is unknown, as is its place of
origin. Theories about the latter range from Jewish influence on Spanish
Christianity to a Byzantine origin[406].

The earliest reference to the Letter derives from what is now Spain: it
is found in a letter in Latin to Vincentius, bishop of Ibiza, from Licinianus,
bishop of Cartagena († before 602). Vincentius had sent a copy of the
Sunday Letter, which he considered to be a genuine revelation, to

see Stübe, 1918, pp. 28-48 and also Priebsch, 1936, pp. 30-1).

[404] There are different traditions about the place where the Sunday Letter fell from
Heaven: Rome, Jerusalem, Bethlehem and other places that play an important part
in Christian culture are mentioned. In some versions it was brought by the
Archangel Michael (Delehaye, 1899, p. 174). The first extant source that menti-
ons the Letter (i.e. Licinianus's letter, see below) mentions Rome as its destinati-
on, which is the same place named in the Irish version (see below).

[405] According to one manuscript (Reg. 2.A.XX, BL) of the Irish version of
Christ's letter to Abgar, this document has the same function: "si quis hanc
epistolam secum habuerit securus ambulet in pace" (Considine, 1973, p. 254), 'if
someone has this letter on one's person, s/he will walk safely in peace'. This
version is moreover concluded by a lorica-prayer/charm. The letter of Christ to
Abgar also had a talismanic function (see Considine, 1973, pp. 237, 241-2). The
preface in manuscript E.4.2, TCD, starts with: "Críst féin ro scríb co n-a láim in
n-epistil-se (...)" (ibid., p. 253), 'Christ himself wrote with his hand this letter'.
A similar phrase is found in El: "(...) Ísu Críst (...) roscríb a láim fessin (...)"
(O'Keeffe, 1905, p. 192). The version about Abgar and Jesus from Leabhar Breac
is Late Middle Irish, dated to perhaps c. 1200 (Considine, 1973, p. 254).

[406] Byzantine-Greek (De Santos Otero, 1961, p. 292), Spain (Ayuso Marazuela,
quoted in De Santos Otero, 1961, p. 295), north-east Spain or the south of Gaul
(Priebsch, 1936, pp. 19-33), Africa, Spain or Rome (McNally, 1973, p. 175),
Africa or Spain (Delehaye, 1899, p. 212), Jerusalem between 451 and 453 (Van
Esbroeck, 1989, pp. 281-4).

Licinianus. The latter wrote an angry letter in reply, which is the only one of the three letters mentioned here that is still extant (Migne, 1849a). Licinianus condemns the Letter: after reading the beginning he tears it up and throws it to the ground. He gives it as his opinion that this Letter was not written by Jesus Christ at all. He adduces several reasons: in the Bible, no letters are sent from Heaven. God reveals things through the Holy Spirit. The only exception is the Ten Commandments, which were miraculously written on stone tablets. Not only the purported source, but also the message of the Letter is rejected by the Spanish bishop. On Sunday, he writes, people should visit church frequently or else do some useful work. He adds that they should neither dance nor sing because that will only excite their desires. Sunday is a holy day, he agrees, for it is the day of Christ's resurrection. The rules about not working, however, belong to the Jewish Sabbath; they are not Christian commandments. Since Licinianus's letter is from the end of the sixth century[407], the original form of the Sunday Letter must be dated to the sixth century or earlier.

Licinianus was not the only one to be enraged by the Sunday Letter. In fact, this Letter can be traced by its official rejections. St Boniface (672/5 — 754) reported to Pope Zacharias (†752) about a certain Aldebert, a bizarre Frankish preacher very popular with the people but full of unorthodox ideas (see Hauck, 1904, pp. 553-65, and Russell, 1964). Aldebert had a 'letter of Jesus fallen from Heaven' in his possession, which he used in his sermons. The result of Boniface's communication with the Pope is the condemnation of Aldebert and the rejection[408] of the Letter at the Lateran Synod, 25[409] October 745 (Jaffé, 1866/1964, pp. 136-48; especially pp. 142-3). Furthermore, Charlemagne in the *Admonitio Generalis*, 23 March 789, commands that an evil and false letter, said to have fallen from Heaven the year before, should neither be believed nor read, but burned (Boretius, 1883/1960, p. 60[410]). It seems likely that these two letters fallen from Heaven are versions of the Sunday Letter[411].

Finally, about 835 (Whitelock, 1982, p. 47) Ecgred, bishop of Lindisfarne (during the period 831-846), writes a letter (edition of the

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[407] This letter is dated to 584 or 585 by Stübe (1918, p. 12) and to before 584 by Priebsch (1936, p. 29).

[408] The bishops wanted to burn the texts related to Aldebert (a *Life* of Aldebert, the Letter fallen from Heaven and a prayer with curious names of angels), but the pope ordered that they be kept (Jaffé, 1866/1964, p. 145).

[409] According to Russell (1964, p. 242), this was on October 26.

[410] Priebsch (1936, p. 9) wonders if there is an earlier reference to the Letter in the canons of the Synod of Verneuil (755), of which he quotes: "*As the people are persuaded* with regard to the Lord's day, that it is not permissible to travel on Sunday by horse, ox or wagon, nor to dress meat or clean the house or meddle with any sort of domestic business (matters which savour rather of Jewish observance than of Christian) we ordain that whatever has formerly been lawful on the Sunday, shall remain so" (italics by Priebsch).

[411] The beginning of Aldebert's Letter is quoted in the acta of the Lateran Synod (Jaffé, 1866/1964, pp. 142-3), and is similar to other Latin versions of the Letter.

Latin text: Whitelock, 1982, pp. 48-9; translation: *idem*, 1955, pp. 806-7) to Wulfsige, archbishop of York, (†836?) about errors written in the book of a certain Pehtred, who seems to have had a Sunday Letter in his possession. Ecgred writes that because of Jesus Christ's resurrection Sunday should be honoured and not the Jewish Sabbath. He rejects Pehtred's assertions about a certain deacon called Nial and Pehtred's "mendacious raving concerning the Old and New Testaments" (Whitelock, 1955, p. 807). Subsequently, he suddenly discusses 'letters', by which he seems to mean copies of the Sunday Letter. He asks why "if such letters written in gold by the hand of God had arrived upon the tomb of the blessed Peter in the days of Pope Florentius" (*ibid.*) the leaders of the Church had not announced this. Moreover, the name Florentius is absent from the papal lists. He goes on to reject further errors about the day and hour of the Day of Judgment and the creation of the Devil (*ibid.*). The golden letters, the hand of God and the arrival at St Peter's sacred place are all elements of the Sunday Letter. Furthermore, the reference to the Sabbath seems also to affirm the assumption that this Pehtred had a version of the Sunday Letter in his possession.

The Sunday Letter became popular in spite of the condemnations, and versions of it exist in many languages. I will focus in this study upon the Irish one. Like the other versions of the Sunday Letter, the Irish text consists of a version of the Letter within the above-mentioned framework. Moreover, after the epilogue the Irish version continues with a little episode on the transfer of the Letter to Ireland and a law text with regulations concerning Sunday. The Irish text is, therefore, a conglomerate of different pieces. Like Dorothy Whitelock (1982, p. 53), I divide the text into three parts[412]: 1. the Letter (§§1-19[413]); 2. the 'historical' episode about the transfer to Ireland (§§20-2) and 3. the law (§§23-33). Parts 2 and 3 obviously are Irish additions.

It is important to note that there is another Irish text entitled *Cáin Domnaig*, 'The Law of Sunday' (edition and translation: Hull, 1966), which gives a more elaborate version of the third part of the text dealt with here. To avoid confusion I will refer to the latter as *Epistil Ísu* (EÍ) and to the former, the 'independent[414]' lawtract, as *Cáin Domnaig* (CD). Furthermore, in each of the three parts of EÍ the text on Sunday is referred to in a different way. The first part presents itself as: 'The Letter of the Saviour our Lord Jesus Christ' (§1); in the second part it is related how

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[412] Robin Flower (1926/92, p. 307) divides the text into two parts: the Letter (§§1-19) and the law (§§20-33), missing the point that the second part identified above about the transport to Ireland connects the Letter and the law. One could compare this with Vernam Hull's (1966, p. 157) overlooking of the fact that in this second part not only the Letter but also the law was brought to Ireland.

[413] The division into sections is from O'Keeffe's edition (1905).

[414] This law text also mentions the Sunday Letter (§9): "(...) *amal to-n-imarnath issind epistil do-rala de nim for altóir Rómæ*" (Hull, 1966, p. 170), 'as it has been bequeathed in the epistle that descended from Heaven on to the altar of Rome' (*ibid.*, p. 171).

both 'The Law of Sunday' (§20) and 'The Letter of Sunday' (§§21-2) were brought to Ireland; the third part speaks only of 'The Law of Sunday' (§§28, 29, 30, 33).

In the manuscripts of EÍ[415] other texts concerning Sunday are to be found as well: first, a text with three anecdotes on supernatural punishments for the transgression of Sunday observance[416] (edition: Meyer, 1901, p. 228); second, *Cáin Domnaig*, mentioned above[417] and third, *Dénaid cáin domnaigh Dé dil*, the poem about Sunday, already mentioned in 1.3.2[418]. However, in the anecdotes and the law text monsters are absent, which is why they are beyond this study's scope.

Martin McNamara (1975, p. 60) sees the Middle Irish[419] poem (this refers to the version edited by O'Keeffe, 1907b) as the metrical version of EÍ. However, it is only the metrical version of a part of EÍ, namely of the *Dignatio diei Dominici*[420], 'The reverence due to the day of the Lord' (§15). This is an enumeration of miracles that have occurred on Sunday and that explain its holy character.

Two monsters[421] are present among the miracles described in this poem. Both come from the OT. The first is described in §14 as follows:

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[415] LB, Harl 5280, 23 N 10, YBL, LFF, Add 4783, 24 P 25. (Cp. also n. 401.)

[416] LB, Harl 5280, 23 N 10, LFF and 24 P 25. The edition is based upon Harl 5280.

[417] LB, Harl 5280, 23 N 10, Add 4783, Gaelic XL (and Rawl B 502); there is a misprint in Hull (1966, p. 151): '(Gaelic MS.) XV' should read 'XL'.

[418] Add 4783, Eg 174, A 9, (H.3.18); the first quatrain occurs separately in H.3.18, TCD; there is a version of 73 quatrains in Eg 174, BL; there are 61 quatrains in Add 4783 (Flower, 1926/92, p. 524); the version with 27 quatrains in A 9, Franciscan Library Dublin, was edited by O'Keeffe (1907b).

[419] Kim McCone pointed out to me some Middle Irish linguistic features that cannot be substituted for Old Irish: in §5 (O'Keeffe, 1907b, p. 143) "*co sligedaib degmaithe*" instead of *degmaithib* (fixed by rhyme); in §10 (*ibid.*, p. 144) "*dogeinset*" instead of Old Irish *do-génatar*; in §13 (*ibid.*) "*dáinib díada*" instead of *díadib* (fixed by elision).

[420] Robert McNally (1973, pp. 181-6) edited what he calls 'three Hiberno-Latin versions of *Carta Dominica*' (although he also writes that they might be of Breton origin (*ibid.*, p. 177). McNally discovered certain relations between these texts and EÍ, the Latin Fathers, Jerome, Isidore, the Sunday Letter and the apocryphal gospels (*ibid.*, p. 179). He was not able to determine the relationship between these Latin texts and EÍ (*ibid.*). My comment on this is that the three texts are all examples of *Dignatio diei Dominici*-texts; his third text, however, gives in its last part a version of the Sunday Letter, beginning with "*Dominus dixit*", 'the Lord said' (*ibid.*, p. 186). Since these texts do not contain monsters I leave them out of consideration.

[421] Dangerous animals can be found in the poem as well: on Sunday one is able to kiss a poisonous serpent without any danger (§23) and on this sacred day lions do not fight (§25). One could compare this with the harmless serpents and lions mentioned in Ps 90:13 and in Isaiah's messianic vision in Is 11:6-9; 65:25 (see also above, 2.3.2.4) although the images in this Irish poem have a peculiar shape of their own.

"'San domnach dodechaid ass   "On Sunday Jonah came out
a broinn in bledhmil Ionas (...)"   of the sea-monster's[422] belly (...)"
(O'Keeffe, 1907b, p. 144)   (ibid., p. 146).

The second one can be found in §24:

"Iasg ingnad sírus an sál   "A strange fish which searches the
                                    sea
darab ainm lúath libedán,   named the swift Leviathan;
dia domnaig bith ar th'aire,   on Sunday, let it be on thy mind,
noco glúais a hénbaile"   it moves not out of one place"
(O'Keeffe, 1907b, p. 145)   (ibid., p. 147).

The immobility of Leviathan is a miracle as this primeval monster is
characterised in several sources by its movements[423].

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[422] O'Keeffe translates *bledmil* by 'whale'. DIL gives *s.v.* 'sea monster, some kind
of reptile; whale (...)'. I emended the translation into 'sea monster' because, first,
Jonah's beast was a sea monster (see above, 2.3.2.1) and, second, because of a
gloss on the word *quieta* in *Oratio Sancti Iohannis Evangelistae*: "*quieta] .i.
antach .i. bledmil*" (Bernard, Atkinson, 1898, I, p. 91), '*quieta*] i.e. inactive, i.e.
sea-monster' (*ibid.*, II, p. 173). Bernard and Atkinson (*ibid.*) suggest that this is a
confusion of κῆτος with *quietus*. This seems likely on the basis of the similarity
between the two words. Furthermore, in chapter 2 two sources have been
mentioned which also associate sea monsters with quietness: first, Ambrose of
Milan speaks of the quiet, isolated lives of *cete* and, second, Pliny describes how
beluae grow in quiet water to a huge motionless bulk (see above, 2.3.2.1).

[423] See, for instance, Iob 41:22-23, where Leviathan makes the sea boil and leaves
a shining track behind. Furthermore, in Is 27:1 the beast is called *tortuosus*,
'winding, tortuous', and the Hebrew name is also connected with movement: the
name Leviathan is probably to be translated as 'the twisting one' (see Day, 1985,
pp. 4-5). One could, moreover, think of the texts mentioned in 1.3.2: the motions
and destruction by Leviathan in ApcAb 21:4; its moving in the Indian Ocean
described in glosses on the *Psalms*; the movement of Leviathan's tail in TBDD
and again, the miracle of the beast lying still, now to serve as an island under the
name of Jasconius in NBA. Another text, not mentioned earlier, even ascribes
earthquakes (and the tides) to Leviathan: Pseudo-Bede's *De Mundi Celestis
Terrestrisque Constitutione Liber*, 'The Book on the Constitution of the Heavenly
and Earthly World' (edition and translation: Burnett, 1985). This is a cosmograp-
hical treatise, which may have come into existence in the 9th, but more probably
the 11th-12th century in a German context (*ibid.*, pp. 1-3). The text reads: "*Alii
dicunt Leviathan animal terram complecti, tenetque caudam in ore suo, quod
aliquando Sole exustum, nititur illum comprehendere, sicque indignationis eius
motu terram quoque moveri. Haurit quoque aliquando immensitates fluctuum ut
etiam omnia maria sentiant in reddendo inundationem, et inde terre moveantur*"
(*ibid*, p. 22), 'Others say that the animal Leviathan embraces the earth, and holds
his tail in his mouth; when sometimes he is burnt by the Sun he struggles to seize
the Sun, and so the earth also is moved by the motion of his indignation. He also
sometimes swallows huge quantities of waves, so that when he spews them back

The poem starts with an admonition to observe the Law of Sunday (*cáin Domnaig*) and adds that "Christ the Lord has surely decreed that Sunday should not be transgressed" (§1, O'Keeffe, 1907b, p. 145). There is no mention of a letter. After an introductory part (§§1-7) the miracles are given (§§8-21) and then the command to ordain the Law of Sunday and to hold Sunday sacred is given again (§22). O'Keeffe (*ibid.*, p. 144, n. 12) suggests that the poem originally ended here as the first word (*dénaid*) is repeated[424]. The miracles that follow (§§23-7, including Leviathan, the snake and the lions) are quite peculiar and could have been added to an older list of Sunday miracles, which may have been the source for this poem[425]. The monsters in the poem are not connected with the monsters in the Letter, and for that reason the poem will now be left aside.

The Sunday Letter is sometimes mentioned among the apocrypha, but strictly speaking it does not belong to them; the sixth century is too late a date (Schneiders, 1990, p. 314: apocryphal texts date from before the fourth century). A better designation is pseudepigraph: a text falsely ascribed to a famous or holy person.

As mentioned earlier this Letter is ascribed to Jesus Christ but, although the first part of EÍ commences with: "Here begins the Letter of (...) Jesus" (§1), there are more references in it to God the Father[426] as the one who wrote and sent the Letter (§§5, 8, 13, 18[427]). Furthermore, comparison of the Irish version with the Latin ones[428] reveals that its

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all the seas experience a flood, and so the lands are moved' (*ibid.*, p. 23; see pp. 24-5 for the motif of Leviathan causing the tides. It should be noted that this text also gives the image of a circle — cp. 1.3.2, 2.3.2.1 and 3.3.2.5.). Therefore, Leviathan is neither *antach* nor in line with the sea monsters described by Pliny and Ambrose (see note 422).

[424] This style figure is called *dúnad*, 'conclusion': "in Irish syllabic verse, and also often in the older poetry, the last word or syllable of the *íarcomarc* ('final stanza') echoes the first word or syllable of the first line of the poem" (Murphy, 1961, p. 43).

[425] For more about *Dignatio diei Dominici*-texts, see Lees (1986).

[426] To be precise, only twice is Jesus Christ explicitly mentioned as the one from whom the command issues: first in the prologue (§1) and second in the introduction to the *Dignatio diei Dominici* (§14). In addition to this, there are general references to 'the Lord' or 'God (Himself)', which may refer either to God the Father or to Jesus the Son. On the whole, the Father is more prominent; for instance, in the testimony to the genuineness of the Letter the Abbot of Rome swears that the Letter comes from God the Father (§18).

[427] This may have been influenced by the OT, in which God sometimes writes the Ten Commandments personally (for example, in Ex 31:18: "(...) *duas tabulas testimonii lapideas scriptas digito Dei*", 'the two stone tablets of testament written by the finger of God').

[428] I have studied these as far as they had been edited and were within my reach. They are:

(1) Ta: Cathedral Library, Tarragona (Baluze, 1677, col. 1396-9; Priebsch, 1936, pp. 35-7). This manuscript is lost, but Etienne Baluze based his edition upon a

structure is less that of a letter. In general, EÍ paraphrases the Letter's contents, although sometimes it seems to give a more literal translation of parts of the original Letter, for instance when direct speech (§§8, 10, 13, 17) and the personal pronoun 'you' (§§10, 13) are used.

In this study I classify the text among the cosmological and eschatological texts. A new order is established: it is announced in the Letter that one day in the week is sacred, or, in other words: tabu. In order to be in harmony with this new κόσμος, 'order', people have to abstain from certain activities. This is exemplified in the law text. The sacredness of the day is shown against the background of God's plans: in God's sacred history this day has always been special. This is demonstrated by the *Dignatio diei Dominici*.

Apart from the announcement of the new order and its rules, the Letter also refers to sanctions in the case of digression from it. God will guard this order. People have to obey or else they will be punished, in this life or in the hereafter. In the latter case, eschatological traditions are used to enforce the new commandment. For these reasons, this text is a representative of the cosmological and eschatological texts.

3.2 *Epistil Ísu*. Summary

As monsters are found only in the first part of EÍ (the Irish version of the Sunday Letter), I will focus mainly upon this.

The text starts with the prologue: the miraculous delivery of the Letter. Jesus Christ is said to have written the Letter in Heaven with his own hand to make Sunday holy for all time. Angels carried the Letter to St Peter's altar in Rome. During this delivery the whole earth trembled from sunrise

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copy by Petrus de Marca, archbishop of Paris (†1164), who discovered it in the library of the cathedral of Tarragona (Priebsch, 1936, p. 3). Baluze dates it to 788; Hauck, however, says that this version of the Letter can be dated equally well to the 7th as to the 8th or 9th century (Hauck, 1904, pp. 554-5, n. 3). McNally (1973, p. 176, n. 9) says about this version of the Sunday Letter: "Certain aspects (...) suggest Irish influence". Unfortunately, this is all he writes about it.

(2) **L1**: Add 30853, BL (Delehaye, 1928, pp. 168-9), 11th century

(3) **M1**: Clm 9550, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek München (Delehaye, 1899, pp. 179-81), 11th century

(4) **P**: Lat 12270, BNP (Delehaye, 1899, pp. 181-4), 12th century

(5) **To**: Todi (Migne, 1858, col. 367-9), 12th century

(6) **M2**: 21518, München (Priebsch, 1895, pp. 41-70), 12th century

(7) **Tou**: 208 (III, 135), Bibliothèque publique de Toulouse (Rivière, 1906, pp. 602-5), 13th century

(8) **V**: Lat 1355, Imperial Library Vienna (Priebsch, 1899, pp. 130-4), 14th to 15th century

(9) **H**: S. Petrikirche 30b, Bibliothek der Hansestadt Hamburg (Röhricht, 1890, pp. 440-2), 15th century

(10) **L2**: Royal 8 F.vi, BL (Priebsch, 1901, pp. 400-6), 15th century.

till sunset, throwing stones and trees in the air. An enormous din sounded and St Peter's grave opened. The Abbot of Rome (the pope), who was saying mass, perceived the Letter on the altar (§1).

After this prologue the contents of the Letter are described (§§2-17). The Letter's message is enunciated: people should observe Sunday. It is stated that all plagues and sufferings in the world are caused by the transgression of Sunday rules (§2). Sunday should be observed from vesper on Saturday till terce on Monday (§6). Further on it is explained why Sunday is a sacred day: it was on this day that Christ rose from the dead and it is on this day that the Day of Judgment will take place (§7). The text adds to these two reasons a third one: even if this command had not come from Jesus Christ out of Heaven, Sunday should be a holy day because of the many miracles that happened on that day (§14). A *Dignatio diei Dominici* is then to be found as a kind of intermezzo in the text (§15).

Acts forbidden on Sunday are listed: among them are disputing, horse-riding, sweeping, washing, shaving, cooking, sexual intercourse[429], swimming, journeying and rowing (§17). Earlier in the text (§9) riding on a horse on Sunday has already been forbidden (for more on this see below). Neither may a slave or ox be worked on Sunday. Their tears will reach God. Even in Hell nobody is punished on Sunday (§9).

These negative precepts have been preceded by a positive command: people should have mercy[430] on the poor, the weak and strangers/pilgrims[431]. In the case of mercilessness the tears[432] of the victims will be manifest on the Creator's breast, who will punish the evil (*olc*) done to them (§5).

Obedience to the commands will be rewarded; transgression punished. The punishments, however, receive more emphasis and are more elabor-

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[429] The text gives *adaltras*. O'Keeffe (1905, p. 203) translates this by 'adultery', but this does not make sense as adultery is forbidden on all days according to Christian rules. For the translation of *adaltras* as 'sexual intercourse (on the forbidden days)', see Breatnach (1987, p. 124). Aidan Breen (letter, 2-11-1995) kindly informs me: "*Adulterium* in Roman civil and (patristic) ecclesiastical law denotes illicit sexual intercourse between a man, whether married or not, and a married woman. *Adaltras* in reference to intercourse on Sunday means only illicit sex, since in canonical law the man should regard his wife though she were not his wife at certain times: such intercourse is committing *adulterium*". For more about the interdiction of sex on Sunday, see 3.3.2.4.

[430] The mercy (*trócaire*) demanded from the people returns later in the text as a quality of God (see §11).

[431] The text reads "*ailithriu*" (O'Keeffe, 1905, p. 194). *Ailithir* means 'stranger, pilgrim' and both these meanings make sense: 'stranger' because of the Old Testament background of the text (compare the prescriptions regarding strangers there) and 'pilgrim' because of the Irish pilgrimage practice.

[432] Compare the tears in §9, which also rise up to God. This idea has biblical roots: for instance, in Sir 35:18-19 the tears and the cry of the widow rise to God in Heaven.

ately described than the rewards[433]. For those who obey, the windows of
Heaven will be opened and God's blessings will be upon them, their
houses and lands. There will be neither poverty nor hunger. Prayers
uttered at sacred burial places will be granted. The earth will be given to
them here and Heaven yonder (§12).

Transgressors will be punished both during and after their life. First
the punishments for the living, then those in Hell will be described. Three
kinds of monster are part of the punishments that God sends to the living
on earth. The first kind is as follows (§3[434]):

"Atát péste i n-aroile randaib thair	There are beasts in certain eastern parts
tuctha co doíne[435]	which were sent to humankind
7 is do dígal in domnaig dorata.	and it is to avenge [the violation of] Sunday that they were inflicted [upon them].
Brucha a n-anman.	They are called *brucha*.
Delgi iarnaidi a finna	Their hairs are iron bristles
7 súile tenntide leo.	and they have fiery eyes.
Tiagat isna fínemna	They go into the vineyards
co teinnet pupu na fíne	and cut the vine's branches
co tuitet for talmain sís	so that they fall down to the ground,
7 atacordat iarum imacúairt imon torad sin,	and then they roll about in that fruit,
co tíagat cóera na fíne im na delge sin	so that the grapes stick to those bristles,
condaberat leo	and they carry them with them
dia n-adbai"	to their lairs
(O'Keeffe, 1905, p. 192).	

The second kind of monster follows immediately (§4):

"Atát and dino locuste	There are also locusts there,
.i. anmanna aile.	which are different animals.
Etti iarnaidi leo.	They have iron wings.
Tennait[436] tra a n-etti im cech ní frisa comraicet.	They press their wings around everything they encounter.
Tíagait iarum isna cruithnechta	They go moreover into the wheat
co tendat na díaso	and cut the ears

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[433] Rewards are mentioned in §§12, 19; punishments in §§2-5, 8-11, 13, 18-19.
[434] The translation of the quotations from Eí are based upon O'Keeffe (1905). I
am indebted to Inge Genee for discussing many aspects of the translation with me.
[435] O'Keeffe has here and in the quotations below *dóine*.
[436] I am indebted to Proinsias Mac Cana who pointed out to me that in this section
two different verbs have been used. First, *tendaid*, 'presses, strains, (...)', denotes
the first action of the locusts and second, *teinnid*, *tennaid*, 'cuts, cracks, breaks,
(...)', describes their second action. For more about this, see 3.3.2.2.

co tuitet for talmain. / so that they fall on the ground.
Do dígal in domnaig forsna / That also is to avenge Sunday on
doíne insin di<u>no</u>" / humankind
(O'Keeffe, 1905, p. 194).

The third kind is mentioned within a series of punishments (§10):

"Mani forcmaid in domnach," / "If you do not observe Sunday,"
ol Fíadu, / says the Lord,
"ina críchaib córaib, / "in its proper boundaries,
dobicfat anbthine móra / to you will come great tempests,
7 lóchait[437] immdai tenntide 7 torann / many fiery lightnings, thunder,
7 srobtene dóidfes / sulphurous fire, which will burn
na clanna 7 na cenéla / the families and nations,
7 casra troma ailchide / heavy stony hail-storms,
7 nathraig lúamnig / flying serpents,
7 dobicfat gennti / and heathens will come to you
úam-si," ol Día fessin, / from Me," says God Himself;
".i. cenél na pagán / "namely, a nation of pagans,
nobbérat i m-brataib / who will take you into bondage
as bar tírib / out of your lands
7 atobopérat / and who will sacrifice you
dia n-deeb fesne" / to their own Gods"
(O'Keeffe, 1905, p. 196).

The last punishment to take place on earth is a rain of fire, which will come on the feast of John[438] killing 'you all, men, boys, women and girls'. Their souls will then go to Hell (§13).

In addition to the punishments on earth the transgressors will be sent to Hell where, moreover, special punishments await them in the shape of torments administered by monsters. First, that by which one sins will become an instrument of torture: a riding animal is transformed into a hellish punishment (§9):

"Nach ech riadar isin domnach / Any horse that is ridden on Sunday
is ech tened / will be a horse of fire
bís hi n-gabul a marcaiga n-iffirn" / between the thighs of its rider in Hell

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[437] O'Keeffe has *lochait*.

[438] This is probably the feast of the decollation of John the Baptist: 29 August (see McNamara, 1975, pp. 66-7). Such a fire is also mentioned in some of the Latin Letters and Old English homilies. This fire is said to come in the autumn, or more specifically, in September, October or November. This is why it is probably not the feast of the *nativitas* of John the Baptist (24 June) which is meant here (see also Whitelock, 1982, p. 61, n. 91). In another, later Irish tradition (see the glosses on FO 29 August; O'Curry, 1878, pp. 426-8; Kenney, 1929/79, pp. 749-53) it is a dragon instead of a shower of fire that comes upon the feast of John the Baptist (and instead of Sunday it is his death that is revenged).

(O'Keeffe, 1905, p. 194).

Second, there are more obscure, monstrous inhabitants of Hell (§11):

"Atát dino cóic   There are, moreover,
biasta móra grannai   five large, horrible beasts
i fudomnaib iffirn   in the depths of Hell,
oc tochra forsin talmain co doíne   seeking [to go] to humankind on
do dígal in domnaig,   earth in order to avenge Sunday,
minasberad trócaire Dé for cúlu"   unless God's mercy should hold them
(O'Keeffe, 1905, p. 196)   back.

The first part closes with the epilogue: the Abbot of Rome utters an oath[439] on the Letter's authenticity (§18). Clerics are admonished to read the Letter aloud to the families and the nations of the world, or else they will go to Hell (§19). This part ends with the promise that anyone who does read this Letter aloud, who copies and obeys it, will have prosperity in this world and be forever in the Kingdom of the next world (§19).

The second part states that a certain Conall mac Coelmaine[440] brought the Law of Sunday from the East when he made a pilgrimage to Rome (§20). He also copied the Letter of Sunday from the Letter that had come from Heaven to the altar of St Peter in Rome (§21). Subsequently, the text describes an episode which seems to me to be a description of how the Letter was miraculously found in Ireland. After a three-day fast[441] by the clergy and the laity Conall, appearing in a vision/dream[442] to a cleric, explains where this copy is to be found and commands him to read it aloud to the people of the world. If the cleric does not obey he will be dead within a month (§22). In my opinion, Conall plays here the role of the angel or angels who usually bring the Letter. He also emerges as an angel: surrounded by a great light and dressed in white linen.

Finally, the Law of Sunday follows. The rules are given, combined with the fines and the exemptions (§§23-33). This third and last part also ends by cursing the transgressors and blessing the obedient (§33).

3.3 The monsters

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[439] There is another oath in §13 (by God).
[440] See appendix I.
[441] In some Latin versions of the Sunday Letter the people fast for three days in order to obtain information about the Letter.
[442] The text says *aislinge*, 'vision, dream'. Both these meanings make sense in this context: the fast preceding it seems to indicate a vision (compare Daniel's vision preceded by a three-week fast Dn 10:3; see also 3.3.2.1), whereas at the same time the text describes the cleric as falling asleep. This suggests a dream.

3.3.1 The monsters' appearance

Five kinds of monster are described in this text; they all embody punishment for the transgression of the Sunday command. They can be distinguished as follows: there are two kinds of monster of the air (locusts and serpents), one of the earth (*brucha*) and two are present in Hell (fiery horses and huge horrible beasts).

The first kind of monster (§3) is designated *brucha*. The Irish word *bruch* comes from the Latin *bruchus/brucus* (Meyer, 1906a, p. 274; Vendryes, 1981, p. 102), 'a kind of locust without wings', which derives from the Greek βροῦχος/βροῦκος, 'a locust, or its wingless larva'. A locust without wings does not contradict the text: with iron bristles the *brucha* bring about the damage. However, *bruch* should not be translated by 'wingless locust' because, like many other monsters, this Irish beast combines characteristics of different animals as will be shown. The *brucha* have six aspects. They serve as a divine punishment (1). They have iron bristles (2) and fiery eyes (3). They live in the East (4) and their coming is described in the past tense (5). They ruin the vineyards by cutting the branches, which drop to the ground; they roll through the grapes and take this fruit, stuck on their bristles, to their lairs (6). The text in YBL differs: here, the *brucha* also enter the cornfields and take away both grapes and ears of corn (see O'Keeffe, 1905, p. 193: crit. app.). It should be noted that YBL often has different readings from the other texts of EÍ.

The second kind of monster (§4) is of the air but also moves over the earth. It is referred to by *locuste*, 'locusts' (also from the Latin: *locusta*). The locusts have four aspects. They are a divine punishment (1) and inhabit some eastern region as well (2). They have iron wings (3) which they press around everything that comes in their way. Wheat especially is their target. They make the ears fall to the ground by cutting them with their wings (4). In some manuscripts (YBL and 24 P 25) the locusts are called 'birds' (*eoin*); here, instead of *tendaid*, the verb *letraid*, 'cuts (off), severs, fells (...)', is used. (For more about this, see 3.3.2.2.)

The third kind of monster (§9) has four relevant characteristics. Serving as a divine punishment (1), it is a transformed terrestrial animal: *ech*, 'a horse'. Horses with which one has sinned on earth become fiery (2) in Hell (3), and accordingly a means of torture. The sinner will have to ride on the back of a fiery horse — an instance, therefore, of the punishment corresponding to the sin (4).

The fourth kind of monster (§10) sent by God to punish the transgression of Sunday observance (1) is designated *nathraig lúamnig*, 'flying serpents'. There is no further description, but it seems justified to suppose that they have wings (2). The flying snakes will punish human beings (3). Thus, the serpents are characterised by three aspects.

The fifth and last — most mysterious — kind of monster (§11) serves as a divine punishment (1), lives in the depths of Hell (2) and is called *bíasta*, 'beasts, monsters' (from the Latin *bestia*). The text speaks of five of these monsters (3); manuscripts Harl 5280, YBL and 24 P 25, however, do not give this number. The beasts are large (4) and horrible (*gránda*; 5).

They are eager to leave Hell to punish humanity (6), but they are incapable of doing so due to God's mercy (7). Seven aspects characterise these monsters.

In summary, all monsters in EÍ represent punishments in God's service. Their aims differ: two kinds threaten the vegetation and three kinds humanity.

3.3.2 Sources and variant versions

In this section the monsters will be dealt with separately. I will examine which sources may have been used by the author of EÍ and which variant versions exist. The texts that I consult are — just as in the two preceding chapters — the Vulgate, apocryphal writings, pseudepigraphs, Latin authors such as Isidore and Pliny, Hiberno-Latin as well as Old and Middle Irish texts. Specific to this chapter is the comparison with Latin versions of the Sunday Letter and Old English homilies in which the Sunday Letter has been incorporated. The search for sources of the monsters' description is part of my attempt to find out whether the monsters belong to the categories of 'native', 'imported', or 'integrated'.

3.3.2.1 The *brucha*

The Latin *bruchus* occurs in the **Vulgate** in several places, a number of which seem to me to be of importance in connection with the Irish *bruch*. In some texts the wingless[443] locust serves as a divine punishment (1), just as the *bruch* in EÍ does. In the prayer of Solomon, *brucus* is enumerated among other 'general' punishments sent by God (II Par 6:28). An instance of a specific divine punishment is given in the *Psalms*: *bruchus* is mentioned in the context of the Ten Plagues of Egypt (PsH 77:46; PsH/G 104:34). The final example of *bruchus* as punishment from God is to be found in the *Book of Joel* (Ioel 1:4; 2:25). Here, the plague of wingless locusts combined with other punishments serve as the announcement of the ultimate divine punishment: the eschatological Day of God[444]. It is important to note that in these four examples from the Vulgate the wingless locust always occurs together with the winged locust, while EÍ describes them first the one then the other (§§ 3-4).

The Irish *bruch*'s bristles (2) could perhaps be linked with stings mentioned in the *Book of Jeremiah* (Ier 51:27), where *bruchus aculeatus*, 'wingless locust furnished with stings/prickles', is referred to[445]. There are no locusts with iron bristles in the Vulgate, but monsters with iron

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[443] Only once does the *bruchus* fly (Na 3:16), but this may mean that it is entering its next phase, in which it transforms from an insect that does not fly into one that does. For more about this, see Sellers (1935-6).

[444] *Dies Domini*, 'the Day of the Lord', is, for instance, mentioned in Ioel 1:15.

[445] In this text (wingless) locusts are compared with horses, which also happens in other Bible texts (for instance, in Ioel 2:4 and Apc 9:7).

body parts do occur. The primeval monster Behemoth has cartilage like iron plates[446] (Iob 40:13). The fourth beast in Daniel's nocturnal vision has large iron teeth (Dn 7:7, 19) and iron claws (Dn 7:19). This monster is destructive, just like the *bruch*: it devours, crushes and tramples underfoot (Dn 7:7, 19). Finally, there are monstrous locusts in John's *Apocalypse* (9:3-11[447]) that have cuirasses (*loricae*) like iron cuirasses (Apc 9:9). They have stings (*aculei*) in their tails but — unlike *bruchi* and *brucha* — they also possess wings and are therefore designated *lucustae*. The relevant part from the *Book of Daniel* and the *Apocalypse* belong to the apocalyptic genre. Iron might be an apocalyptic symbol, which would account for its use in EÍ. There are, however, no direct parallels between the Vulgate and EÍ as far as bristles made of iron are concerned.

The same is true of the third aspect: fiery eyes. No wingless locusts with fiery eyes are found in the Vulgate, but sometimes *bruchi* are linked with fire. The plague in the *Book of Joel*, of which the *bruchus* is part, seems also to be described as a fire[448] (Ioel 1:19-20; 2:3, 5). The prophet Nahum predicts that the city of Nineveh will be devoured by fire and the people perish by the sword, which will devour them like the *bruchus* (Na 3:15). The wingless locust is mentioned here in the same sentence as the fire, but it seems to be an image for the sword.

There is also mention in the Vulgate of several fiery beasts, but in the present context the focus will be on fiery eyes in particular. In the *Book of Wisdom*, God sends several kinds of beast as punishment. One of them is relevant in this context:

"aut novi generis ira plenas et ignotas bestias	or beasts of a new kind, full of wrath and unknown,
aut vaporem igneum spirantes	either emitting fiery smoke
aut odorem fumi proferentes	or producing a smell of smoke
aut horrendas ab oculis scintillas emittentes"	or sending forth dreadful sparks from (their) eyes
(Sap 11:19).	

These beasts kill people not only by the harm they cause but also because of the fear aroused by seeing them (Sap 11:20). Fiery eyes can, moreover, be found in the *Book of Daniel*: after a three-week fast the prophet Daniel sees in a vision a man dressed in white linen and gold (Dn 10:3-5) whose eyes burn like a lamp (Dn 10:6). From his arms to his feet he looks like glowing/glittering copper/bronze (*aes candens*) and his voice is like the sound of a multitude (*ibid.*). Finally, fiery eyes are present in the *Apoca-*

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[446] Compare its 'partner in monstrosity' Leviathan, to whom iron is like straw (Iob 41:18).

[447] See 3.3.2.2, where Apc 9:7-11 is quoted.

[448] This might be based upon the fact that a land after a 'visit' by hordes of locusts looks very much the same as a land scorched by fire. Furthermore, it should be noted that this plague and the fire may very well symbolise human enemies.

lypse of John: someone like the Son of Man has eyes as a flame of fire (Apc 1:14), as have the Son of God (Apc 2:18) and the rider — called 'the Word of God' — on the white horse (Apc 19:11-13). This 'Word of God' will rule the nations with an iron rod (*virga ferrea*[449]) and tread the winepress of God's wrath[450] (Apc 19:15). Since it is evident that these 'four' are no monsters, the only important parallel concerning fiery eyes are the mysterious beasts from the *Book of Wisdom*[451]. However, this combination of iron and fiery eyes in apocalyptic writings might have been a source of inspiration for the Irish author.

The fourth aspect is their place of habitation: the East. If the *brucha* (and the locusts) are to be traced to the Bible, then this makes sense since these plagues are described as taking place in what can be seen from Ireland as 'the East'. I will return to this in the sections about *brucha* in Old English homilies and about locusts (see 3.3.2.2).

Related to this is the fifth characteristic: the text describes the *brucha* as a punishment that has already taken place in the past. If I am correct then this can be explained by the fact that the punishment has its roots in the Ten Plagues of Egypt. But I will return to this later as well.

The sixth aspect of the *brucha* is that they destroy vineyards. Only in the *Book of Joel*, where the wingless locust is mentioned among three other punishments, can the vineyard be found as one of its targets. There is some similarity to the Irish text in the thorough way in which the plants are destroyed. A strong and numberless 'people' with teeth like lion's teeth has descended on earth (Ioel 1:6) and

"posuit vineam meam in desertum	it has laid waste my vineyard
et ficum meam decorticavit	and it has deprived my fig of its bark;
nudans spoliavit eam	it has stripped it laying it bare
et proiecit	and it has thrown it down;
albi facti sunt rami eius" (Ioel 1:7).	its branches have been made white

Although this text is also about the fig, it might have been used as a source that inspired EÍ's author. Locusts with and without wings destroy all the hay (*faenum*) and all the fruit (*fructus*) in Ps 104:35. In PsH 77:46 the *bruchus* destroys the buds (*germen*). The vine (*vinea*) is here (Ps 77:47) wrecked by hail (*grando*). Therefore, the *Psalms* give a more general aim — the vegetation — which is destroyed, although the fruit might be connected with the grapes. An important difference is that in the Vulgate the grapes are not taken away, as in EÍ.

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[449] This iron rod comes from (the Messianic) Ps 2:9 and is also mentioned in Apc 2:27 and 12:5.

[450] This winepress is also mentioned in Is 63, see especially verse 3.

[451] According to Silverstein (1935, p. 67), "Eyes that gleam or give forth fire are frequent among the monsters of Christian eschatology" but he gives no examples.

In summary, the following characteristics of the *bruch* can be found in the Vulgate: the sending of the *bruchus* as a punishment from God (1) and the fact that it was sent — from the East (4) — to humanity in the past (5, see below). In the *Book of Joel* the *bruchus* destroys the vineyard, which could be compared with the cutting of the vine's branches by the *bruch* (6). The bristles of the Irish beast (2) may perhaps be connected with the stings of the *bruchus* in the *Book of Jeremiah*. Monsters with iron body parts are present in the Vulgate, especially in apocalyptic contexts (Dn, Apc, but also in Iob). However, not one of them has iron bristles (2). In the *Book of Wisdom* beasts with fiery eyes (3) occur, although they are not specified as wingless locusts. In the apocalyptic biblical texts fiery eyes can also be found, but nowhere do they belong to wingless locusts.

The four plagues from the *Book of Joel* are also mentioned in the **non-canonical** *III Baruch* 16:3: "κάμπην καὶ βροῦχον καὶ ἐρυσίβην καὶ ἀκρίδα" (James, 1897, p. 94), 'caterpillar, wingless locust, rust and locust', together with hail, lightning, fury, the sword, death and the demons that are to be sent to children, are divine punishments[452]. This originally Greek text dates from the first or second century (H.E. Gaylord in Charlesworth, 1983, pp. 655-6). It does not seem to have had much impact in Western Europe, although it may have influenced the *Apocalypse of Paul* (*ibid.*, p. 660). The latter text is highly important in connection with the Sunday Letter, as will become clear. *III Baruch* does not give any details about the wingless locust, which as an example of a divine punishment is in line with the canonical books. The text does therefore not offer new information.

I did not find iron bristles or other iron body parts in the non-canonical books. However, in apocalyptic texts iron is used to punish the souls of people, for instance in the *Apocalypse of Peter*[453] (ApcPe; an English translation is given in James, 1924/89, pp. 506-24; a translation into German by C. Detlef G. Müller in Schneemelcher, 1904/89, pp. 566-78). Witnesses of this text are, on the one hand, Greek fragments (including the Akhmim fragment; edition: Preuschen, 1905, pp. 84-7) and an Ethiopic version and, on the other hand, quotations in texts by the Fathers of the Church (edition: *ibid.*, pp. 87-8; see Müller in Schneemelcher, 1904/89, pp. 563-6). The text probably came into existence in Egypt about 135 (*ibid.*, p. 564).

The *Apocalypse of Peter* was also known in Latin in the West

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[452] The Slavonic version reads: "But bring them painful diseases and horrors and caterpillars and locusts and storms, thunder and hail and devastation to their cities, and demons to strangle their children, because they do not fear God and they do not come to church and to the place of prayers. Bring them curses, and no success in good, and murder" (*III* (Slavonic) *Baruch* 16:2).

[453] Other texts are also known by this title, but their contents differ: an Ethiopic ApcPe II, an Arabic ApcPe I and II and finally, a Coptic ApcPe (Müller in Schneemelcher, 1904/89, p. 563).

(Harnack, 1895, and James, 1911, pp. 380-3). St. John D. Seymour (1926, pp. 112-3) tries to establish whether this apocalypse was known in Ireland too, presenting certain clues[454], but according to McNamara (1975, p. 103), these are no definite evidence of the presence of ApcPe in Ireland.

In ApcPe, punishments in Hell are shown (in the Greek version) or described (in the Ethiopic version) to Peter by Jesus Christ. Sinners are tormented in groups: those who committed the same sin are punished together, with their punishment in some cases related to their sin. In the Ethiopic version Peter asks Christ to have pity on the sinners and it seems to be hinted at that the sinners will be saved by the prayers of the righteous (see James, 1911, pp. 365-6; id., 1924/89, p. 520). The Ethiopic text ends with "orders as to the observance of the greater feasts, a last injunction as to secrecy, and the conclusion" (id., 1911, p. 366).

I have drawn attention to these motifs from ApcPe because there is a similarity between them and motifs from EÍ. General similarities are: in EÍ hellish punishments are also mentioned (the fiery horse; the five monsters from Hell); the motif of punishment suited to the sin (the fiery horse, see 3.3.2.3); the idea of respite from hellish torment — in EÍ only applied to Sundays (again in the section about the fiery horse) and, finally, the command to observe Christian feasts, which in EÍ pertains to Sunday.

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[454] Seymour (1926, p. 112) refers to *Fís Adamnán*, 'The Vision of Adomnán' (FA; edition, translation and commentary: Colwell, 1952; dated *c.* 1000; *ibid.*, p. 1), §32: "*Is é dano forcetul ba menciu dogníd Petar ocus Pol ocus na apstail archena .i. píana ocus focraice d'innisin ár ro faillsigthea dóib fón cuma cétna*" (*ibid.*, p. 289), 'The preaching most frequently done by Peter and Paul and the other apostles was this, i.e. the telling about the torments and rewards, as they were revealed to them in the same manner' (*ibid.*, p. 290). Seymour (1926, p. 113) is of the opinion that the reference to Paul undoubtedly is to *Visio Sancti Pauli apostoli*, 'The Vision of St Paul the Apostle', (also known as the *Apocalypse of Paul*) and he suggests that the remark about Peter's preaching would then refer to ApcPe. Furthermore, Seymour refers to a certain infernal punishment of which variant versions can be found in *Timna Muire*, 'The Testament of Mary' (TM; edition and translation: Donahue, 1942, pp. 28-57), and in FA §28, which motif could come from ApcPe (for more about this, see 3.3.2.4). Finally, he mentions an Old Irish sermon (edition of the text in 23 P 3: Meyer, 1903a; edition and translation of the YBL text: Strachan, 1907), in which 'Peter' (*Petar*) is quoted which could refer to an apocryphal or patristic work. (TM is also known as the Irish *Transitus Mariae*, 'The passing away of Mary'; the form of the apocryphon found in the two vernacular Irish texts is dated *c.* 700 by Michel van Esbroeck quoted in Herbert, McNamara, 1989, p. 184. However, Ruairí Ó hUiginn (letter, 16-10-1995) kindly let me know that the language of the extant texts is Late Middle Irish or Early Modern Irish, which can be concluded from the use of *do-* (instead of *ro-*, although this occurs as well) and the use of independent (instead of infixed) pronoun objects. Instances of the former are: "*do-creidisa*", "*do-creididar*", "*do-ṡuigedar*", "*do cuimscedar*", "*d'iarrumar*", "*do-bamar*" (beside "*ro-slanaiged*", etc.; Donahue, 1942, p. 50); examples of the latter are: "*ro-slanaiged e fein*" (*ibid.*), "*nach beirenn a n-a cirt fein iat*" (*ibid.*, p. 52), "*ro-crochad misi*" (*ibid.*, p. 54), etc.)

There are also more specific motifs which may throw light on the monsters from EÍ. In this context those which resemble the characteristics of the *bruch* will be mentioned. Both iron and fire can be found in the description of Hell. In ApcPe, eyes are burned with red-hot iron as a punishment (ApcPe Gr. §28; Eth. §9[455]). Children flash forth lightnings, piercing the eyes of the ones who are punished by them (ApcPe Gr. §26; Eth. §8). Fire is used throughout the whole description of Hell as means of torture. I will return to the punishment involving children in 3.3.2.4. Here, it suffices to conclude that iron and fire are used in this apocalypse as instruments of punishment; there are no direct parallels with the iron bristles and fiery eyes of the *bruch* but, as I hope to show, apocalyptic motifs may have influenced the descriptions of the monsters in EÍ, including the *bruch*.

The *Apocalypse of Peter* influenced the *Apocalypse of Paul*[456] (James, 1924/89, p. 525; Duensing, De Santos Otero, 1989, pp. 645-6). The *Apocalypse of Paul* (ApcPa; edition of the Long Latin text: James, 1893, pp. 11-42; translation: *id.*, 1924/89, pp. 526-55; German translation: Duensing, De Santos Otero, 1989, pp. 647-75) is a work written in Greek either from the end of the 4th century (James, 1924/89, p. 525) or from the 5th century, perhaps soon after 431 (Silverstein quoted in McNamara, 1975, p. 105). The oldest extant and most complete[457] witness, however, is the Latin translation, also called the Long Latin text[458], which was followed by several shorter redactions (Duensing, De Santos Otero, 1989, p. 644). At this moment twelve short redactions have been identified. Redactions I to VIII are described by Theodore Silverstein in his monograph (1935). The oldest of these eight was written in the 9th century or earlier (Silverstein, 1935, p. 9). This is Red. VI, which will turn out to be of importance in connection with the fiery horse (see 3.3.2.3). The others are dated to the 10th—12th century (*ibid.*, p. 12). The redactions he discovered later are those referred to as Reds. Br, IX and X (see *id.*, 1959, p. 203). "They enlarge our knowledge on the history of the *Vision of St Paul* from the eleventh to the sixteenth century (...)" (McNamara, 1975, p. 106). Red. XI was identified and edited recently (Dwyer, 1988); this version is extant in a 9th century manuscript (*ibid.*, p. 121). The majority of the short redactions are, therefore, later than EÍ, but Reds. VI and XI come into consideration as possible sources.

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[455] The division into sections of the Greek text is given in both translations; the Ethiopic text is divided into sections in the German translation only.

[456] A Coptic gnostic work is also known by this title (see Wolf-Peter Funk in Schneemelcher, 1904/89, pp. 628-33).

[457] The ending of ApcPa is only found in a Coptic translation. For a survey of the different versions of ApcPa, see Duensing, De Santos Otero (1989, pp. 644-7).

[458] The oldest surviving manuscript of the Long Latin version of ApcPa is Nouv. acq. Lat. 1631, BNP, 8th century (edition: James, 1893, pp. 11-42), of which the archetype might be dated to the 6th century (based on the language; Silverstein, 1935, pp. 5-6). A second, independent, witness is Codex 317, St. Gall Stadtbibliothek, 9th century (edition: *ibid.*, pp. 131-47).

Several motifs from ApcPa also occur in Irish texts about visions. Seymour[459] gives an enumeration and alleges (1930, p. 33) that ApcPa is "an apocryphon which was read in the monastic schools in Ireland". Dumville (1977-78, pp. 69-70[460]) is more cautious about the presence of ApcPa itself in Ireland but he does refer to the Irish connections of Red. VI of ApcPa[461]. Charles Wright (1990) has supplied some evidence which could argue for an Irish origin of Red. XI[462]. Carey is of the opinion that the long Latin version of ApcPa was a source of Canto II (Carey, 1986, pp. 94-7) and a lost hybrid version of Reds. III and IV was the source of Canto V (id., 1989b, p. 44) of the Middle Irish *Saltair na Rann*, 'The Psalter of the Quatrains' (SnR; edition: Stokes, 1883; a more recent edition and translation of certain parts: Greene, Kelly, 1976). Finally, there are two Irish translations of the ApcPa[463] (edition: Caerwyn Williams, 1948-52, pp. 129-34; translation of the text in LFF in Seymour, 1923a, pp. 54-6; translation of the text in 24 P 25 in Herbert, McNamara, 1989, pp. 132-6[464]), but they are Early Modern Irish[465] and, therefore, outside this study's scope. There are, on the whole, more indications of knowledge of ApcPa than of ApcPe in Ireland, but a detailed study is necessary to give a deeper insight into this.

The *Apocalypse of Paul* starts with an introductory story of how it was found: a man has a nocturnal vision in which an angel tells him three times

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[459] Seymour (1923a, pp. 58-9) refers to FA, ICUC, EÍ, TM and the *Vision of Tnugdal*, concluding (*ibid.*, p. 59): "it is clear that the mediaeval versions of the *Vision of St Paul* were known in Ireland from an early date. (...) That the very oldest versions (especially the Latin) were studied in Ireland seems also probable". In his later article, Seymour (1926, p. 108) refers to a textual tradition which he calls the *Bringing forth of the Soul* (see Seymour, 1921; see also McNamara, 1975, pp. 110-3, 127-8), FA, the *Vision of Tnugdal* and the *Vision of Fursa*, as recorded by Bede (HE III.19). (*Visio Tnugdali* is outside the scope of this study as it was written in 1149 by Marcus of Ratisbon/Regensburg, but it should be noted that this Latin vision gives many parallels of motifs described in this study.)

[460] Dumville comments upon the opinion of C.S. Boswell (1908/72, p. 181) that the Irish author of FA knew ApcPa: "This seems likely enough but it is not easy to prove, simply because the material presented by this most popular apocalypse became the common coin of western vision-literature in the Middle Ages" (Dumville, 1977-78, p. 69).

[461] For more about this, see 3.3.2.3.

[462] For more about this, see 3.3.2.4.

[463] These two texts tell why people are not punished in Hell on Sunday, which connects them with EÍ §9. They are found in manuscripts which also give a text of EÍ: LFF and 24 P 25.

[464] According to Caerwyn Williams (1948-52, p. 128) and McNamara (1975, p. 107), they represent Red. IV of ApcPa. McNamara (*ibid.*) mentions that this Red. IV is also represented by Pseudo-Bede's *Homily* 100; the text in 24 P 25 follows this text very closely. (See also *ibid.*, pp. 108-9 and Seymour, 1923a, pp. 56-7 for a peculiar, very late Irish version of ApcPa.)

[465] I am indebted to Gearóid Mac Eoin, who pointed this out to me.

to break up the foundation of his house and to publish that which he finds. The man does not believe the vision but when he is scourged by the angel he obeys. He finds a marble box bearing the inscription that it contains the *Apocalypse of Paul* and St Paul's shoes. The box is brought to the emperor who opens it and finds the *Apocalypse*. He keeps the original and sends a copy to Jerusalem (Ethiopic ApcPa §§1-2; in the Greek version the emperor keeps a copy and sends the original to Jerusalem). There then follows the apocalypse describing how an angel shows Paul the place of the righteous and the bottomless pit with its punishments. Just as in ApcPe, some of the punishments fit the sins. When Paul has seen many torments, he weeps and asks for mercy on these creatures that undergo the horrors of Hell (§43). The Son of God then descends from Heaven and grants the sinners respite. He says: "(...) on the day whereon I rose from the dead I grant unto all you that are in torment refreshment for a day and a night for ever" (James, 1924/89, p. 548). This is therefore the story that offers a background to EÍ §9: it tells why sinners have respite from hellish torments on Sunday. This, together with the matching of sin and punishment and the nocturnal vision that reveals a written revelation, are general similarities between ApcPa and EÍ (for more about this, see 3.3.2.3).

Furthermore, just as in ApcPe, fire and iron can be found in ApcPa. Iron is used as hellish torture instrument. In the Long Latin text of the ApcPa §34, angels pierce the entrails of an old man with an iron of three hooks. Fire is found throughout the apocalypse, but more interesting for the comparison with the *brucha* is that in ApcPa §11 punishing angels have flashing eyes and, incidentally, sparks of fire go forth from their hair and mouths.

Fire and iron are also used in other apocryphal visions of Hell. The Greek *Apocalypse of Ezra* (GrApcEz; edition: Wahl, 1977, pp. 25-34; translation: M.E. Stone in Charlesworth, 1983, pp. 571-9; dated to between the 2nd and 9th centuries AD) describes in chapters 4 and 5 how the prophet Ezra[466] descends to Tartarus where he sees people punished, for instance with fiery axles (GrApcEz 4:16). The Antichrist is restrained by iron bars (4:25). The Latin *Vision of the Blessed Ezra* (VisEz; edition: Wahl, 1977, pp. 49-61[467]; translation: J.R. Mueller and G.A. Robbins in Charlesworth, 1983, pp. 587-90; dated to between the 4th and the 7th centuries AD) is even more elaborate in the descriptions of hellish punishment. Fire is used throughout the book. Of special interest in this context are lions, from whose mouths, nostrils (in mss V and H)/ears (in ms L) and eyes powerful flames go forth (VisEz 3). In verses 43 and 45 iron is used to torture.

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[466] The protagonist Ezra is the figure known from the biblical *Book of Ezra*. In the apocalypse, he is called 'the prophet' instead of 'the scribe'. M.E. Stone (in Charlesworth, 1983, p. 566) explains this shift as due either to the later Christian tendency to make every biblical author into a prophet or to his role as a recipient of visions.

[467] See also Wahl (1978).

There is one more non-canonical text that deserves attention: the Latin *Passio sancti Bartholomaei apostoli* (PB), which is Book VIII in the *Apostolic History* of Pseudo-Abdias (edition: Bonnet, 1898/1959, pp. 128-50; the Latin manuscripts go back to the eighth or ninth century; James, 1924/89, p. 468). In this text a devil is described (§7): he is black, sharp-faced, with a long beard, hair down to his feet, fiery eyes like red-hot iron ("*oculos igneos sicut ferrum ignitum*"; Bonnet, 1898/1959, p. 146), sparks leaping from his mouth, a sulphurous flame coming from his nostrils, with prickly wings like a porcupine ("*alas spineas sicut istrix*"; *ibid.*) and is bound with fiery chains. In this text fiery eyes — compared with glowing iron — are part of the body of one of the hellish torturers, who is expelled from an idol.

My search for aspects of the *bruch* in non-canonical scripture leads me to the following observations: wingless locusts are mentioned as a divine punishment in *III Baruch*. This text, however, was probably not known in early Ireland. Hellish punishments are described in ApcPe and ApcPa — two texts which seem to have left traces in early Irish texts — and, in this context, iron is used to torture souls. In ApcPe children flash forth bolts of lightning targeted at the eyes of punished people. The text does not say from where the bolts come; perhaps the children use their own eyes. In ApcPa punishing angels have flashing eyes. Fire and iron are also used to torture souls in GrApcEz and VisEz. In the latter text, lions serve as a divine punishment in Hell and have fiery eyes. Finally, in PB a devil with fiery eyes compared with red-hot iron is described. There are, thus, no precise parallels with the characteristics of the *bruch*, but it seems not inconceivable that its second and third aspects have their roots in apocalyptic texts such as the ones mentioned above. The comparison with a porcupine with its spines is interesting too: a similar but smaller specimen from the animal world can be connected with the *bruch*, which will now be shown.

Isidore of Seville did not list the *bruchus* in his *Etymologiae*, but he does mention a motif involving grapes very similar to that found in the description of the *bruch*. However, this is done by a different animal, the hedgehog[468] (*ericius*), described in the chapter about *De minutis animantibus*, 'About small living beings':

"Huius prudentia quaedam est;	It has a certain skill;
nam dum absciderit uvam de vite,	for when it has cut a grape from a vine,
supinus sese volutat super eam,	it rolls itself on it on its back
et sic eam exhibet natis suis"	and in this manner it delivers it to its
(Lindsay, 1911/71, XII.3.7)	offspring.

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[468] I am indebted to Mayke de Jong, who informed me of this characteristic of the hedgehog in Jacob van Maerlant's *Der Naturen Bloeme* (a bestiary from the 13th century), which led me to Isidore.

Isidore probably borrows this from Pliny's *Naturalis Historia*[469] (VIII.LVI.133). Here, it is described how hedgehogs (*irenacei*) fix fallen fruit (*poma*) on their spines by rolling on them:

"Praeparant hiemi et irenacei cibos	Hedgehogs also prepare food for winter:
ac volutati supra iacentia poma	rolling on fallen fruit,
adfixa spinis,	fixing them on their spines
unum amplius tenentes ore,	and holding one more in their mouth
portant in cavas arbores"	they carry them to hollow trees
(Rackham, 1940/83, p. 94).	

Now the question arises as to what moved the Irish author to assign characteristics of the hedgehog to the wingless locust. In other words: how was *bruch* connected with *ericius*?

I do not think that the Irish author was unaware of the meaning of the word *bruchus* and associated it by error with the hedgehog. The Vulgate refers to *bruchus* as a type of locust and the author of EÍ seems to be familiar with this fact, as can be concluded from §4 where the locusts are contrasted with the *brucha* in §3 by the expression *anmanna aile*, 'different animals'. This needs to be added only if one is aware of the similarity between *bruch* and locust. Moreover, it is important to note that in the four examples of the *bruchus* as a divine punishment in the Vulgate it is always accompanied by the locust (*locusta*).

Furthermore, the Fathers of the Church also describe the *bruchus* as a form of the locust. St Augustine of Hippo (354 — 430) writes in his *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, 'Detailed Interpretations of the Psalms', about Ps 104:34: "*Vna plaga est locustae et bruchi; quoniam altera est parens, altera est fetus*" (Dekkers, Fraipont, 1956, p. 1547), 'The locusts and wingless locusts are one plague, because the one is the parent and the other is the offspring'. Exactly the same information can be read in Prosper of Aquitaine's (*c.* 390 — after 455) explanation of the *Psalms* (Callens, 1972, p. 34), and Flavius Magnus Aurelius Cassiodorus (*c.* 485 — after 580) writes: "*Locusta uero mater bruchi est, quem mala fecunditate progenerat, quae ad illam praedam quasi conuocatus exercitus cum sua prole descendit*" (Adriaen, 1958, p. 952), 'The locust is the mother of the bruchus, which it breeds with oppressive abundance; it descends on its prey like a gathered army with its offspring' (Walsh, 1991, p. 60). Jerome (*c.* 341 — 420) similarly describes the *bruchus* as offspring (*fetus*) of the *locusta* in his *Commentary on the Book of Amos* (Adriaen, 1969, p. 313).

The Church Fathers thus supply the information that the *bruchus* is the young form of the locust, but they do not describe what it looks like. There is only one (biblical) description of its appearance and that is *aculeatus* in Ier 51:27. Therefore, this could form the basis known to the

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[469] In Greek epigrams this is also told about the hedgehog (ἐχῖνος): it rolls like a ball on grapes and steals them (Waltz, 1960, pp. 45, 93).

Irish author: a young beast with prickles or bristles that serves as a divine punishment.

It seems, moreover, as if even more knowledge was available: the young locust is larva-like and could perhaps be viewed as some kind of caterpillar or worm. I will now try to argue that the Irish author of Eí may have had in mind an image of the *bruch* as a caterpillar-like beast with bristly hair. I will therefore adduce more texts that deal with locusts, hedgehogs and caterpillars and try to find out in what way they might have been associated with each other.

The image of a hedgehog with grapes on its spines not only occurs in continental sources, but also in an insular one: in a gloss on the *Psalms* in Codex Palatinus Latinus 68. This gloss elaborates upon Ps 103:18[470]:

"PETRA REFUGIUM HERINACIS.	THE ROCK IS A REFUGE FOR HEDGEHOGS.
id est bestiolae	That is: small beasts
quae in cauernis petrarum fiunt	which live in caverns of rocks
quia nequeunt ascendere montes;	because they cannot climb mountains.
herenacius sic ut pila[x[471]] rotundus,	The hedgehog is just as a round ball,
spinis plenus,	full of spines,
et ascendit in uitem	and it climbs into the vine
et diecit in terram uuas	and it scatters the grapes on the ground
et in spinis aufert"	and carries (them) off on (its) spines
(McNamara, 1986, pp. 213-4).	

It should be noted that this gloss bears some similarity to the hedgehog's description in the *Physiologus* version Y. I put the similar phrases in bold type:

"HIRINACIUS autem	The hedgehog, however,

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[470] "(...) petra refugium erinaciis (PsG)/ericiis (PsH)". This is the only place in the Vulgate where *erinacius* occurs. The Hebrew text, however, refers to something else: שׁפן, 'rock-badger, *hyrax syriacus*, coney' (three different animals!), which is translated by χοιρογρύλλιος, 'Heb. *shâphân*, *hyrax syriacus*, coney' in the Septuagint (LXX). One of the manuscripts (Θ) of the Vulgate reads *cuniculus*, 'rabbit, coney', in PsH 103:18. It should be noted that Augustine renders Ps 103:18 as: "*Petra refugium ericiis et leporibus*" (Dekkers, Fraipont, 1956, p. 1515), therefore, he adds hares to the hedgehogs. For more about hares and hedgehogs, see below.

[471] *Pilax* actually means 'cat', but this looks like a corruption. Because of the context and the similar phrases in Pliny and the *Physiologus* (see below) I translated it as *pila*, 'ball'. Isidore refers to this characteristic of the hedgehog by the term *globus*, 'ball, globe', (*Etymologiae* XII.3.7) and Pliny by *pila* (NH VIII.LVI.133).

species non habet	has no contours
sicut pile,	just as a ball;
totus autem **spinis plenus** est.	it is, moreover, entirely full of spines[472].
Phisiologus dixit de eo	Physiologus said about it
quoniam **ascendit in** botrum **uitis**,	that it climbs into the grape of the vine
et **deicit** acinas **in terram**	and it casts down the berries on the ground
(hoc est **uuas**);	(this is: the grapes)
et deuoluens se super eas,	and, rolling itself on them
et adherens fructus uitis eius **spinis**,	and sticking the fruit of the vine to its spines,
affert filiis suis,	it carries (them) off to its children
et remittit racemum botrui uacuum"	and it leaves the stalk of a cluster of
(Carmody, 1941, p. 114)	grapes empty behind.

This version compares the hedgehog with 'that most vile spirit' (*"illum spiritum nequissimum"*; Carmody, 1941, p. 114). By this the Devil is meant, which is even more clear in version B (before 386; Carmody, 1939, p. 7) of the *Physiologus*, where it says *"spinosus diabolus"* (*ibid.*, p. 27), 'the prickly Devil'. The gloss on Ps 103:18 does not, however, connect the hedgehog with the Devil.

The hedgehog in Ps 103 is not presented as a punishment. However, the other instances[473] in the Vulgate where *ericius* occurs describe a divine punishment in which God will destroy cities, which then become desolate places, inhabited by all kinds of beast and monster, including the hedgehog[474].

There are obviously some connections between *ericius* and *bruch*. They may serve as divine punishments (1); they possess bristles/spines (2) and in some texts they carry grapes off on these bristles/spines (6). I would now like to go a step further in the search for the links between hedgehogs and locusts and it seems that another link is present in the caterpillar (*eruca*), which is also a small animal that may serve as a divine punishment.

It is important to note that the wingless locust is nowhere presented as an isolated punishment. The caterpillar is sometimes found in the same context. Divine punishments that are mentioned along with the *bruchus* in

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[472] Cp. the translation by Curley (1979, p. 24): "The hedgehog does not quite have the appearance of a ball as he is full of quills".

[473] *Ericius* is used by Jerome to translate the Hebrew קִפֹּד, 'porcupine', — in the LXX ἐχῖνος, 'hedgehog' (Is 14:23; 34:11; So 2:14). In Is 34:15 both the LXX and the Vulgate give another 'hedgehog', where the Hebrew, however, reads קִפּוֹז, 'arrow-snake'. Incidentally, Is 34:15 also refers to the hedgehog feeding (*enutrio*) its young (*catuli*).

[474] This might explain why the LXX translators and Jerome emended קִפּוֹז (a *hapax legomenon*) into קִפֹּד: they knew the hedgehog as a symbol of wilderness, which fitted the context.

the Vulgate can be found in figure 4:

Figure 4

II Par 6:28	PsH 77:46	PsG 77:46	PsH 104:34	PsG 104:34	Ioel 1:4[475]
erugo aurugo lucusta brucus	brucho lucustae	erugini lucustae	lucusta bruchus	lucusta bruchus	erucae lucusta/e bruchus/i rubigo

These punishments are agricultural disasters brought about by either insects or plant diseases. *Lucusta*[476] occurs in all the above given quotations, *bruchus*[477] in nearly all. The exception is to be found in the translation of the Greek Ps 77:46: ἐρυσίβη, 'rust (a fungus disease of plants)', in the LXX has been translated by *"erugini"* in PsG. The other words in the listing above — *aurugo*[478], 'mildew', *eruca*[479], 'caterpillar', and *rubigo*[480], 'rust' — do not pose any problems, but *erugo* and *erugini* deserve some attention.

The translation of *erugo* (*erugini* seems to be its dative form) is somewhat problematic. This is not only a problem of modern research[481],

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[475] The same terms occur in Ioel 2:25 (*lucusta, bruchus, rubigo, eruca*). Incidentally, instead of these four different punishments the Hebrew text has four words which all mean some kind of locust. These are: נזם, ארבה, ילק and חסיל. These four different terms have been explained as successive stages in the development of the locust, of which ילק/*bruchus* represents the first and ארבה/*lucusta* the last phase (Sellers, 1935-36). The Vulgate text, however, seems to have been influenced by the LXX, which gives the following words: κάμπη, 'caterpillar', ἀκρίς, 'grasshopper, locust, cricket', βροῦχος, 'locust, or its wingless larva', and ἐρυσίβη, 'rust'.

[476] The Hebrew original everywhere reads ארבה, which has consistently been translated by ἀκρίς in the LXX.

[477] In the other quotations where the Vulgate gives *bruchus* the LXX reads βροῦχος. The Hebrew text, however, has two different terms: חסיל (II Par 6:28; Ps 78:46) and ילק (Ps 105:34; Ioel 1:4; 2:25).

[478] The Hebrew has ירקון, 'mildew, rust'; the LXX ἴκτερος, 'jaundice'.

[479] As mentioned earlier, the Hebrew gives a word for locust: נזם ; the LXX has κάμπη, 'caterpillar'.

[480] Again, the Hebrew has another word for locust: חסיל; the LXX has ἐρυσίβη, 'rust'. Therefore, both here and in the case of *eruca* Jerome followed the LXX, just as in his translations of *bruchus* in these quotations.

[481] The other terms in this section are sometimes also translated in a different way. Ronald Edward Latham (1965/73, p. 57) gives the translation of *bruchus* as 'locust *or* caterpillar' in his *Medieval Latin Word-list*. The translation of *bruchus* as caterpillar fits in with the theory proposed here, but I did not find it in other dictionaries. The opposite (the translation of a word for caterpillar as a locust) can be found in modern research as well: G.J.M. Bartelink (1978, p. 293) explains

but also existed in the time that the texts central here were written down or copied, which can be deduced from variant readings of and glosses on the word. *Erugo* seems to be a variant spelling of either *aerugo*, 'rust' (in metal or as a plant disease), or *eruca*, a beast[482]. Jerome seems to have used the word *erugo* in its two meanings. In II Par 6:28 he probably meant the disease as this was how his source text read both in Hebrew and Greek (see below). However, in one of his commentaries he uses the word to signify a creature mentioned in a series of beasts serving as divine punishments: the locust, wingless locust and caterpillar. In his *Commentary on the Book of Malachias* Jerome explains 'the devourer' (Mal 3:11) who threatens the fruit of the land and the vine as either *lucusta* or *bruchus* or *erugo* or *eruca* (Adriaen, 1970, p. 935).

Erugo (as a noun) occurs seven times in the Vulgate[483] and in five cases[484] it obviously means 'rust' (in metal) and is probably used there as a variant spelling of *aerugo*. In two texts — II Par 6:28 and PsG 77:46 — the meaning of the word is not so obvious. This becomes clear in the case of the former in variant readings and in the case of the latter in glosses. In both cases the context makes it clear that a disaster in the vegetation is meant but whether this is caused by a disease (*aerugo*) or a beast (*eruca*) is not clear.

In II Par 6:28 two manuscripts read *eruca* instead of *erugo*. Therefore, some copyists saw the disaster as caused by a beast. The original text, however, speaks of a disease: the Hebrew text reads שִׁדָּפוֹן, 'smut (on crops)', which is translated in the LXX by ἀνεμοφθορία, 'blasting, blight'. The manuscripts of the Latin Bible thus present two possibilities instead of one.

In the case of the *Psalm* text the Hebrew Bible and the LXX give unambiguous terms, but the LXX does not literally translate what the Hebrew text says. The LXX translates the Hebrew חָסִיל — a kind of locust — as ἐρυσίβη[485], thereby replacing a beast by a plant disease. In PsH 77:46 the locust (*bruchus*) is given, just as in the Hebrew text; in PsG the mysterious *erugo* can be found. They were also mysterious to readers in the past because the word needed explanation in glosses. The glosses are not unanimous: the word is explained both as a plant disease and as a beast. In Codex Palatinus Latinus the term "*erugini*" in Ps 77 is explained in Old English as 'mildew, blight'[486]. Julian of Eclanum's *Epitome*

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eruca as the smallest locust in the series mentioned in Ioel 1:25.

[482] See the *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae*, Leipzig, 1931-53, vol. V.2, *s.v.*

[483] II Par 6:28; PsG 77:46; Bar 6:11, 23; Mt 6:19, 20; Iac 5:3.

[484] Bar 6:11, 23; Mt 6:19, 20; Iac 5:3. Incidentally, small beasts (*tinea*) are mentioned together with the rust in four of these five cases (Bar 6:11; Mt 6:19, 20; Iac 5:2).

[485] The same happened in Ioel 1:4 and 2:25, but here the Vulgate reads *rubigo*.

[486] *Erugini* is glossed *brondegur̄*. Several explanations have been offered for this Old English word, of which Patrick O'Neill (1981, p. 2) gives a survey. All of them take the word as a compound. The first part — *brond* — is translated by 'mildew', 'blight', or 'burning'. The second part gives rise to more diverging

explains *erugini*[487] as 'small, little animals' (*exigua parvaque animalia*[488]) which destroy the work (i.e. the crops) of the Egyptians (De Coninck, d'Hont, 1977b, p. 283). These small animals should refer to locusts as these are the only beasts that destroy the vegetation in the Ten Plagues (both in Ex 7:14-12:30 and Pss 77 and 104), which is the context of the glossed *Psalm* verse. Therefore, this supplies a connection between the locust and a beast called *erugo* or *eruca*.

It seems not improbable that there was knowledge about the different phases of the locust, which is indicated by the different terms, as *lucusta*, *bruchus* and *eruca* or *erugo*. In another gloss — on Ps 104:34 — in Codex Palatinus Latinus some of the locust's phases are mentioned and connected with the terms *locusta*, *bruchus* and *eruchus*:

"DIXIT ET UENIT LOCUSTA. — [GOD] SPOKE AND THE LOCUST CAME.

id est locusta spicas disipat. — That is: the locust destroys the ears (of grain).

LOCUSTA. — LOCUSTA

id est loco stans — [because] it is staying in a place (*loco stans*)

quando auis parua sine alis super terram; — when it is a small bird without wings upon the earth;

qui et eruchus erudiendo radices — it (is) also the *eruchus* because it

opinions: for instance, some consider it to be a scribal corruption of *erug-*. O'Neill, however, takes it as *egor, eagor*, 'water, sea', and postulates that it is a gloss belonging to *grandine* (*grando* means 'hail(storm)') in the following verse in the *Psalm*. According to O'Neill, the two glosses (*brond* on *erugini* and *egur̄* on *grandine*) were combined by a scribe who did not know Old English and, when copying a manuscript, removed the glosses from the margins and interlinear positions into the text, thereby writing the two words as if they were one (O'Neill, 1981, pp. 3-4).

[487] The text of the edition has been normalised into *aerugini*; Lucas de Coninck (letter, 11-1-1994) has informed me that the lemma of Codex Ambrosianus C 301 gives *erugini*.

[488] It should be noted that in the *Epitome* and the gloss on Ps 103:18 the hedgehog is described as a small animal as well: "*bestiolis minutis*" (De Coninck, d'Hont, 1977b, p. 336), "*bestiolis minutis*" (Stokes, Strachan, 1901-3/75, I, p. 411) and "*bestiolae*" (McNamara, 1986, p. 213). In this context Prv 30:24-28 is of some interest: four kinds of small animal (*minima*) are given, of which the second is *lepusculus*, 'a (young or little) hare, leveret', which lives in the rocks (Prv 30:26). The Hebrew text gives here the earlier mentioned שפן, which is consistently translated by χοιρογρύλλιος in the LXX. The Vulgate is not that consistent: in Ps 103 — as mentioned above — it gives *erinacius/ericius*; here it is *lepusculus* and in the other two texts it reads *chyrogryllius* (Lv 11:5) and *choerogyllium* (Dt 14:7). For more about this, see below. Incidentally, the third small animal is the locust (*lucusta*; Prv 30:27). (Compare Isidore, who classifies the hedgehog as small living being (*Etymologiae* XII.3: *De minutis animantibus*) and the locust as small flying/winged being (XII.8: *De minutis uolatilibus*).)

consumes (*erodere*) roots

quando uermis in terra;

when it is a worm in the earth;

qui et bruchus buriendo fruges,

it (is) also the *bruchus* by burning up ([*com*]*burere*) the fruits of the earth;

id est quando peruolat igneis alis" (McNamara, 1986, p. 219)

that is: when it flies about with fiery wings.

The glossator seeks to combine an etymology of the words with the description of the several stages of development of the locust. The information given about the *locusta* will be dealt with below (see 3.3.2.2); here, *eruchus* and *bruchus* will receive some attention.

Eruchus is connected by the glossator with *erodere*, 'to gnaw off/away, to consume'. I do not know for certain what *eruchus* means but would like to suggest that it is a caterpillar, like *eruca*. First, because of the comparison with the worm (*vermis*) in the gloss; second, because Isidore also connects *eruca* etymologically with *erodere*. Isidore writes in his *Etymologiae* XII.5.9: "*Eruca* (two manuscripts read *eruga*) *frondium vermis* (...) *ab erodendo dicta*", 'The caterpillar, a foliage worm, (...) is named after *erodere*[489]'. *Eruchus* seems to represent the larva-stage of the locust in the gloss. *Bruchus* is purported to be related to *burire* presumably representing *comburere/comburire*, 'to burn up, to consume[490]'. It is enigmatic to me that the wingless locust has (fiery) wings in this gloss. I can think of no explanation for this inversion of the aspects of the locust with and without wings. The fiery aspect of the *bruchus* in this gloss could be compared with the fiery eyes of the *bruch* in EÍ.

Another source of these glosses on the *Psalms* (McNamara, 1986, pp. 54, 219) are the *Two Books of Instruction* by St Eucherius of Lyon. The section on beasts presents *erinacius*, *ericius*, *bruchus* and *eruca* in a series:

"Erinacei (herinacei; erinachii) XOIPOΓPYΛΛOI nuncupantur,

The *erinacei* are called *choirogrylloi*[491];

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[489] Compare Pliny's description of the *urucae*, 'caterpillars', which gnaw away (*eroduntque*) leaf and flower of the olive (NH XVII.37.229; Rackham, 1950/61, pp. 158-9).

[490] I am indebted to Lucas de Coninck, who has pointed this out to me (letter, 11-1-1994).

[491] Lewis and Short (1879/1991, *s.v.*) explain *choerogryllus* as 'a kind of hare', referring to the Vulgate (Lv 11:5; Dt 14:7). It seems probable to me that this confusion of hedgehogs, hares/rabbits/coneys and *hyraxes* could partly be traced back to Jerome's translation of שָׁפָן. The latter writes about this in *Epistula CVI*: "'Petra refugium herinaciis.' Pro quo in Hebraeo positum est 'sphannim', et omnes τοῖς χοιρογρυλλίοις uoces simili transtulerunt, exceptis Septuaginta, qui 'lepores' interpretati sunt. Sciendum autem animal esse non maius ericio, habens similitudinem muris, et ursi: unde in Palaestina ἀρκόμυς dicitur, et magna est in istis regionibus huius generis abundantia, semperque in cauernis petrarum et terrae foueis habitare consuerunt" (Labourt, 1955, p. 137), 'The rock is a refuge for hedgehogs/*herinaciis* — for which in Hebrew 'sphannim' is rendered, and all

prope magnitudinem mediocrium cuniculorum	having almost the size of ordinary rabbits (and)
de cauernis petrarum[492] procedentes	coming from caverns in the rocks
gregatim in heremo quae est	they eat in flocks in the desert which
contra mare Mortuum depascuntur.	is beside the Dead Sea.
Ericii qui EXINOI dicuntur	The *ericii* which are called *echinoi*
ita spinoso defenduntur tegmine,	are in such a way defended by a prickly covering
ut ne contingi quidem possint.	so that they cannot even be touched.
Bruchus (brucus) in psalmo	The *bruchus* in the *Psalm* is:
lucustae (locustae/ lugustae)	locusts
quae nondum uolant.	which are not yet capable of flight.
Eruca (erucha) quam uulgo doluam uocant"	The *eruca* is that which they call everywhere *dolva*[493] (caterpillar)
(Wotke, 1894, pp. 157-8).	

I shall now return to the Bible, Jerome and Isidore for a few more possible links between the worm-like caterpillar and the wingless locust. Dt 28 enumerates blessings for people who observe God's commandments and curses for transgressors. Among the punishments, locusts and worms are mentioned. When the people sow seed, they will gather little because the locusts (*lucustae*) will devour everything (Dt 28:37). When they plant a vineyard (*vinea*) they will neither drink wine nor obtain anything from it because it will be destroyed by worms (*vermes*; Dt 28:38). It is interesting to compare these verses with the two relevant sections in EÍ, where locusts destroy the (sown) grain and *brucha* the vineyards.

Eruca occurs three or four times in the Vulgate: in II Par 6:28 (as

(voices) have transferred this with the similar τοῖς χοιρογρυλλίοις, the Septuagint excepted, which has translated 'hares'. However, one should know that there is an animal no greater than the hedgehog resembling the mouse/rat and bear; whence it is called ἀρκόμυς ('bear-mouse/rat'?) in Palestine, and there is a large abundance of its kind in those regions, and they are always accustomed to live in caverns in the rocks and pits in the earth'. From this it becomes obvious that Jerome used a manuscript of the LXX with the variant reading λᾶγώός, 'hare'. This sheds some light on this complex matter, but further study is needed. The word ἀρκόμυς seems to be a compound of ἄρκος, 'bear', and μῦς, 'mouse, rat'. Χοιρογρυλλίος might also be taken as a compound, but that does not elucidate much: χοῖρος is a 'young pig, porker, swine' (but compare χήρ, 'hedgehog'), just as γρῦλλος, 'pig, porker' (but compare the Latin *gryllus*, 'cricket, grasshopper').

[492] Compare "*quae in cauernis petrarum fiunt*" in the above-quoted gloss on Ps 103:18; this text by Eucherius might be its source (McNamara, 1986, p. 212).

[493] In the earlier edition (Migne, 1859, col. 821) *eruca* is not mentioned. The sentence reads there: "*Bruchus, in psalmo (Ps. LXXVII, CIV), locustae quæ nondum volant, quam vulgo olbam vocant*". This would give a direct link between the caterpillar and the *bruchus*, but I am not sure whether the manuscript has this reading or this is a mistake in the edition.

variant reading of *erugo*), Ioel 1:4; 2:25 and Am 4:9. It is always a divine punishment. The first three texts were dealt with above; the *Book of Amos* reads:

"percussi vos	I have struck you
in vento urente et in aurugine	with a burning wind and mildew.
multitudinem hortorum vestrorum et	The caterpillar has consumed your many gardens and
vinearum vestrarum oliveta vestra	your vineyards, your olive-groves
et ficeta vestra comedit eruca	and your fig-plantations
et non redistis ad me	and you have not returned to me,
dicit Dominus"	says the Lord
(Am 4:9).	

In the *Book of Joel*, the vine was also among the targets of the *eruca*. It should be noted that in both *Joel* and *Amos* the Hebrew text gives a word for locust (גזם); the LXX reads κάμπη. Therefore, again Jerome followed the Greek translation.

A further possible link between the caterpillar and the wingless locust can be found in the commentary on the *Book of Amos* by Jerome, and in Isidore's *Etymologiae*. Jerome writes in his commentary that the *eruca* is the worst punishment. He compares the caterpillar with the locust: "*quae non auolat ut locusta*" (Adriaen, 1969, p. 266), 'which does not fly away, like the locust'. The locust leaves the vegetation behind half-eaten, but the caterpillar stays on the ground and destroys everything. This is quoted by Isidore in his information about the *eruca* (*Etymologiae* XII.5.9; see also above). The caterpillar, Isidore writes, rolls itself into the vine (and the cabbage). Then he quotes Jerome: it does not fly to [something] (*advolat*), like the locust (*locusta*), but consumes the complete crop.

In nature there is a similarity between the caterpillar and the very first stage of the locust: "The newborn larvae have a vermiform appearance (...)" (Palmoni, 1962-76, p. 147). Perhaps there was some knowledge in early medieval Europe of the worm-like appearance of the locust. The glossator on the *Psalms* seems to have been aware of this as the gloss connects the worm (*vermis*) with *eruchus*, probably a variant spelling of *eruca*. Eucherius only describes two phases of the locust (*bruchus* and *locusta*). He mentions the *eruca* after these two and it is the glossator on the *Psalms* who adds it (calling it *eruchus*) as a third stage. Eucherius also adds that the *bruchus* does not fly. Jerome and Isidore write this about the *eruca*. It has to be admitted, however, that the context is different: the *bruchus* does not yet fly, whereas the *eruca* does not fly away.

I will now connect these findings with the details about the *brucha* from EÍ. My conclusions remain tentative, however, because it is not

evident which sources were available to the Irish author[494]. Both *bruchus*
and *ericius* are mentioned in the Vulgate as divine punishments. In several
places *bruchus* is mentioned in the company of *eruca/erugo*, which is
another divine sanction (1). If the author of EÍ knew about the vermiform
appearance of the first phase of the locust, then this may have been the
link between *bruchus* and *eruca/erugo*. The gloss on Ps 104:34 compares
the *eruchus* — the name of a locust phase — with a worm (*vermis*); Isidore
writes that the *eruca* is a worm (*vermis*) and in Dt 28:37-38 the destructive
work of locust and worm (*vermis*) is described, whereby the worm attacks
the vineyard. Furthermore, Eucherius writes that the *bruchus* does not fly,
which is said about the *eruca* by Jerome and Isidore, and in these three
texts the flying locust is compared with the non-flying beast, albeit in a
different sense. The wingless wormlike locust (*bruchus*) turns out to have
prickles (2), as can be read in the *Book of Jeremiah* (51:27), which
characteristic could be associated with the bristles of the hedgehog men-
tioned by Pliny, Eucherius, the *Physiologus*, Isidore and the glossator on
the *Psalms*. None of the texts mentions iron bristles. There are no fiery
eyes (3) either, but the remarkable gloss on Ps 104:34 does give the
bruchus fiery wings. There are no explicit references to the origin of the
beasts in the East (4), nor that they have been punishments in the past (5),
but again, from the Irish perspective, these divine sanctions in the Vulgate
are in accordance with these characteristics. The *erugini* from PsG 77:46
and the glosses destroy the crops of the Egyptians, just like the *bruchi* in
one of the Ten Plagues. The vineyards are destroyed by the *vermis* (Dt
28:38) and the *eruca* (Am 4:9), which could be compared with the cutting
of the branches of the vine by the *bruch* (6). The removal of grapes on
spines (6) is done by the hedgehog, as described by Pliny, Isidore, the
Physiologus, and in the gloss on Ps 103:18, the only place in the Vulgate
where the hedgehog is not a divine punishment.

It is not possible to determine the exact source the Irish author used.
Not one of the descriptions is a literal parallel to the image of the *bruch* in
EÍ, but it is highly probable that some of the texts here described were
used as sources of inspiration. Of most of the texts it has been established
that they were known in early Ireland. The *Physiologus* is an exception; on
the other hand, the symbolism in NBA connected with Jasconius (see
2.3.2.1) and the similarity between the *Physiologus*'s description of the

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[494] There is another text in which the wingless locust is described as a noxious
animal in the context of destroying vineyards: *Hamartigenia* by the Spanish poet
Aurelius Prudentius Clemens (348 — after 405). He writes: "*quamuis maceries
florentes ambiat hortos saepibus et densis uallentur uitea rura, aut populator edet
gemmantia germina brucus aut auibus discerpta feris lacerabitur uua*" (Stam,
1940, p. 72), 'Although a hedge surrounds the flowering gardens and the viney-
ards are protected by thick hedges, either a robber, the locust, will devour the
shooting buds or wild birds will tear the grape to pieces' (*ibid.*, p. 73). However,
it is not clear whether the Irish author knew this text and, moreover, birds seem
to destroy grapes, whereas the wingless locust, called a robber but not described
as taking something away, devours buds.

hedgehog and the gloss on Ps 103:18 seem to suggest that it was known.

Another example of Latin texts that describe related images will now be considered. A parallel of the second aspect of the *bruch* is found in *Cosmographia* by Aethicus Ister (perhaps the same as Virgil, bishop of Salzburg (†784); Lapidge, Sharpe, 1985, p. 169). The author describes barbaric islands in the North (§38) and quotes 'the philosopher':

"(...) locusta, brucus et tinea et	locust, wingless locust, worm and
formica arabica	Arabian ant
ungulis ferreis	with iron claws
rabi[a]e frivolosa contorta	by empty, vehement rage
subdole eradicaverunt	have cunningly destroyed
intemerata saxa; (...)"	unviolated stone walls[495]
(Wuttke, 1853, p. 27).	

Again, the *bruchus* is mentioned in combination with the locust. Instead of iron bristles, the wingless locust has here iron claws.

In the **Latin versions of the Letter**[496], *bruchi*[497] can be found as divine punishment (1) for the transgression of Sunday observance (in Ta[498], L1, M2, Tou and V). They are always mentioned in combination with *locus-tae*[499]. No Latin Letter is as ample in describing them as the Irish one. Nowhere do the wingless locusts have iron bristles (2) or fiery eyes (3).

There is a clue in one version about their eastern origin (4). M2 is concluded by a small episode (Priebsch, 1895, pp. 67-70): in the days of the very holy Father Georgius[500] great plagues came over Christians, Saracens[501] and Jews in Jerusalem. One of these was the coming of a multi-

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[495] Another translation of *intemerata saxa* is also possible: 'pure rocks'.

[496] There are only dates of manuscripts in the literature, not of the texts themselves (with the exception of Ta). I will not offer a theory about the historical development of the texts nor of their interrelationship, for this is beyond this study's scope. I will, however, give a survey of a few motifs which concern monsters.

[497] Spelled as "*brucos/brucus*" and once as "*bruscos*" (Tou).

[498] For the abbreviations, see n. 428.

[499] Sometimes they are mentioned in an enumeration in which other animals are also to be found (see below).

[500] It says here: *Georigi* (Priebsch, 1895, p. 67), but somewhat further the manuscript reads: *Georgium* (*ibid.*, p. 70).

[501] According to W.R. Jones (1975, p. 171), in later versions of the Sunday Letter the reference to 'pagan peoples' is specified as 'Saracens'. He refers to two manuscripts of the BL (Add 23390 [this should read: 23930, JB] and Add 16587, BL; *ibid.*, p. 177, n. 29) from the 14th century. However, this word was already used in Sunday Letters from manuscripts of the 12th and 13th century (M2 and Tou). The word 'Saracen' came into use in the 1st to 3rd centuries by classical authors referring to an Arabic people in the Sinai. Then it came to denote Arabs

tude of countless locusts and wingless locusts ("*locusta et brucus*"), which ate all hay, all bark of the trees and all foliage as far as the roots (*ibid.*, p. 68). After some time during which other plagues and drought afflicted them, a three-day fast was held by the Christians and then God sent rain. Subsequently, a servant of God sees a vision in which an angel explains that the plagues are punishments for not observing Sunday (*ibid.*, pp. 69-70).

Therefore, the punishment is administered in the East and it happened in the past (5). Other versions also describe the wingless locusts as something that happened in the past, as Jesus writes in his Letter: "*misi*" (L1); "*dedi*" (M2) and "*mandavi*" (Tou). On the other hand, there are examples in which he threatens with this punishment in the present tense: "*mitto*" (V) or in the future: "*mittam*" (Ta) as well.

Finally, the vineyards (6) are sometimes hit by divine wrath[502] but not explicitly as targets of these beasts. They are sent to 'you' (Ta, M2, Tou, V) or 'the people' (L1). In two versions they will eat 'your fruit' (Ta, V). In the final episode of M2, mentioned above, they have destroyed all vegetation in Jerusalem.

In one version (P), in which the *bruchi* (and the locusts) are absent, Jesus threatens to send little poisonous beasts:

"et mittam in os vestrum sive	and I will send in your mouths,
in oculos vel aures	in eyes or ears
bestiolas quas vocant scyniphes	little, poisonous, vicious beasts which
venenatas pessimas ad devorandum	they call *scinifes* to devour you
vos"	

(Delehaye, 1899, p. 182).

(*S*)*cinifes*/(*s*)*ciniphes*[503] means 'a kind of stinging insect'. According to J. Gessler (1935-36, pp. 28-9 and 1936, pp. 11-2), *scinifes* are poisonous gnats, which are a more apt expression of the '*brucos et locustas*' in other Latin versions of the Sunday Letter. However, he gives no arguments why this should be the case. I will try to see whether there are any reasons for

in general and, after the rise of Islam, Muslims were called Saracens. Between the 11th and 13th centuries the enemies of the Christian crusaders were designated 'Saracens'. In the 9th century and later, Muslims had come to Italy and Spain (see Loyn, 1989, *s.v.* 'Saracens').

[502] For instance, M1 says: "*et delebo vineas vestras, et non dabo vobis pluviam, et auferam a vobis fructus vestros*" (Delehaye, 1899, p. 180), 'and I will destroy your vineyards and I will not give you rain and I will carry off your fruit from you'. Here, Christ fulfils the punishment that in the Irish Letter is carried out by the *brucha*: the taking away of fruit/grapes. In this version the *bruchi* and *locustae* are absent.

[503] This word comes from the Greek σκνίψ, 'an insect found under the bark of trees, eaten by the woodpecker', and also 'an insect which attacks vines', or from κνίψ, 'small creatures which infest fig and oak trees and devour the fig-insect (ψήν)', or 'small ants'.

this equation.

Scinifes are the Third Plague of Egypt (Ex 8:16-17; compare also PsH/G 104:31). They come from the dust and terrorise both humans and beasts. What is the link between *bruchi* and *scinifes*? Just as *scinifes bruchi* have 'stings[504]' but they are locusts and are, therefore, a representation of the Eighth Plague (Ex 10:4-15). It should be noted that in Christian homiletic tradition the Ten Plagues are connected with the Ten Commandments. This is important to the present study, as the Ten Plagues are relevant examples of divine punishment. Furthermore, the purpose of the Sunday Letter is the renewal of the Commandment concerning the Sabbath.

St Augustine associates the Ten Commandments with the Ten Plagues in Sermon VIII (Lambot, 1961, pp. 79-99). He lists the Sabbath's Commandment as the third and he connects the rest ordained by God with the *scinifes*: very small, restless flies (*muscae*) that allow human beings no rest, flying irregularly and attacking the eyes (*ibid.*, pp. 84-5[505]). The plague of locusts is associated with the Eighth Commandment: thou shalt not bear false witness. Augustine connects this beast with its noxious teeth with people 'biting and devouring' each other. He borrows the image of 'biting people' from Gal 5:15 (*ibid.*, p. 88).

Others, such as Caesarius of Arles (c. 470 — 542[506]), followed Augustine in this remarkable association of Commandments and Plagues. *Scinifes* and the Sabbath's Commandment were therefore linked in the early Middle Ages. To me, however, this does not seem to be sufficient reason to agree with Gessler. There are indeed similarities between *scinifes* and *bruchi*: they have 'prickles'; they serve as a divine punishment, especially as two of the Ten Plagues, but one cannot conclude that the former are a more apt expression of the latter.

Summarising these findings, I can state that the Latin versions of the Letter always name the *bruchi* together with the *locustae*. They are a divine punishment for the transgression of Sunday observance (1). One version describes the punishment as administered in the East (4), while several others have it take place in the past (5). In some versions they

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[504] Isidore relates that *sciniphes* are very small flies (*muscae*) that are very troublesome (*permolestae*) because of their stings (*aculei*). It is the Third Plague that has stricken the proud people of the Egyptians (*Etymologiae* XII.8.14). André (1986, p. 295) points out that Isidore borrows here from Augustine, *De Trinitate*, 'On the Trinity', III.7 (the Third Plague; Mountain, Glorie, 1968, p. 139) and from Eucherius, *Instructionum libri II* (the very troublesome stings; Wotke, 1894, p. 157).

[505] In the final part of this sermon, Augustine elaborates further upon the Sabbath's Commandment (Lambot, 1961, pp. 94-8).

[506] There are two versions of Caesarius's sermon, C (Morin, 1953a) and C A (*id.*, 1953b), which used to be attributed to Augustine. I am indebted to Aidan Breen (letter, 23-10-1992), who pointed this out to me and supplied the correct bibliographical information (see Machielsen, 1990a, no. 806). Incidentally, in Sermon C A Caesarius connects a symbolical beast (*bestia*) with every commandment, giving the *scinifes* and locusts the same place and function as Augustine does.

destroy the vegetation, in particular the fruit (6?). However, the *bruchi* in the Latin versions of the Letter are not said to have iron bristles (2) and fiery eyes (3).

Small, dangerous animals have been described in the previous chapter about the **Hiberno-Latin**[507] *Life of Columba* (VC II.42). They are *aculeis permolestae*, 'very troublesome because of their stings'. Eucherius of Lyon and Isidore of Seville say the same about *scinifes* (*aculeis permolestae*; compare 2.3.2.5 and note 504). But here the similarity ends: the following three kinds of beast have stings, but *brucha* move over the earth, *scinifes* in the air and the little beasts swim. Furthermore, in VC iron is used as instrument of torment: demons attack with iron spits (III.8). These similarities between VC and EÍ are, however, too meagre and too general to consider the one text as a source for the other. The only parallel offered is the above-quoted description of the hedgehog in the (Hiberno?-)Latin gloss on Ps 103:18: just like the *bruch* the hedgehog fixes grapes on its bristles and carries off the fruit.

There are six **Old English homilies**, in which the Sunday Letter has been incorporated (Whitelock, 1982, p. 47, n. 1[508]). Priebsch (1906-7, p. 139) attributed Hom. A and B[509] to Pehtred, mentioned above (see 3.1). According to Priebsch, Pehtred may have been a parish priest, who lived about 830 in the diocese of York (*ibid.*, p. 139). Whitelock, however, deduces from Ecgred's letter (see 3.1) that Pehtred "was living in a diocese under the authority of the metropolitan church of York, but not in the diocese of York or Lindisfarne. Hexham and Whithorn, but also the English church of Mayo in Ireland, are possible" (Whitelock, 1982, pp. 49-50). The above-mentioned book of Pehtred could have been a collection of sermons in Old English, Hom. A and B among them (Priebsch, 1899, p. 142). Priebsch (1906-7, p. 145) assumes that Pehtred's source must have have been Latin, because the quotation of the beginning of the Letter

in Hom. A and B is in Latin. He suggests that Pehtred wrote a Latin

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[507] In order to find sources and variant versions in Hiberno-Latin texts I consulted the Database of Medieval Latin from Celtic Sources (April 1993).

[508] These are (and I follow Whitelock's designations):
1. Hom. A: no. XLIII in Napier (1883, pp. 205-15)
2. Hom. B: no. XLIV (*ibid.*, pp. 215-26)
3. Hom. C: no. LVII (*ibid.*, pp. 291-9)
4. Hom. D: in Napier (1901, pp. 355-62)
5. Hom. E: no. XLV in Napier (1883, pp. 226-32)
6. Hom. F: in Priebsch (1899, pp. 135-8).

They are all extant in 11th-century manuscripts (Whitelock, 1982, p. 51). I am indebted to Dan O'Donnell who advised me about my translations from these sermons, for which I mainly used *A Glossary of Wulfstan's Homilies* (Dodd, 1908/68).

[509] For the abbreviations, see note 508.

sermon about this Letter, which he may have shown to an Irish cleric[510] who translated it into Irish (*ibid.*, pp. 148-9). The Latin homily is no longer extant.

Priebsch's view has been disputed by Karl Jost and Dorothy Whitelock. Jost (1950, pp. 231-2) is of the opinion that the sermons are difficult to date; they are, in any case, later than Pehtred's book. Parts of the book may have been incorporated into the sermons, though. Moreover, according to Jost (*ibid.*, p. 231) the two homilies (A and B) have a common Old English source.

Whitelock (1982, p. 51) sees Hom. A and B as variant versions of a lost homily, which was based upon Pehtred's book. She dates this common exemplar to not before 962 (see *ibid.*). Furthermore, she (*ibid.*, pp. 58, 68) believes that Pehtred received the Sunday Letter from Ireland. In her view, Pehtred and the Irish author of EÍ used the same Latin source (*ibid.*, p. 60).

This problem of who influenced whom may be allowed to rest for a while; I will return to it in 3.3.2.5. First, attention will be focused upon whether and how the monsters from EÍ reappear in these sermons. As Priebsch (1906-7, p. 139) observes, Hom. B in particular is related in an interesting way to EÍ: they have four kinds of monster in common[511].

Hom. B (Napier, 1883, p. 221, ll. 6-7, 16) and F (Priebsch, 1899, p. 136, l. 49) give parallel images of the *bruch*. Hom. B first gives a Latin quotation[512] in which *brucus* is mentioned. Subsequently, this is translated into the vernacular by *ceferas*[513], from *cefer*, 'beetle'. In these sermons the beetles are presented before the locusts and the two of them have their own particular destructive function, just like the *brucha* and locusts in the Irish Letter.

The beetles have neither iron bristles (2) nor fiery eyes (3), but in Hom. B they are described as beasts that were sent at some time in the past. Jesus writes (with golden letters) that he sent beetles but 'you' did not fear. Somewhat further on (ll. 15-8) it is told how 'the Lord' once sent beetles to the human beings because of their working on Sunday. The beetles destroyed all forests. After the sending of locusts, fiery rain and sulphurous fire the human race nearly perished, but thanks to God's mercy this did not happen. This 'flashback' is concluded by "*þis wæs geworden*

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[510] Priebsch (1906-7, pp. 148-50) imagines this meeting between Pehtred and the Irish cleric (the supposed author of EÍ) to have taken place in Northumbria. He suggests that the Irish cleric told Pehtred about the Irish Niall mac Iallain, who is mentioned in the Irish *Annals* (see Whitelock, 1982, p. 49) as well as in sermons A and B. In Hom. B Niall testifies to the Letter's genuineness and warns of God's wrath, which will strike in the case of disbelief and transgression of the observance of Sunday (see *ibid.*, p. 52).

[511] I cannot find any monsters in Hom. C and D.

[512] "*amen, amen, dico uobis, quod misit brucus in uobis, et non timuisti eos*". The clause *amen (amen) dico vobis* occurs regularly in connection with the punishment threats in the Latin versions of the Letter.

[513] In Hom. F: *ceaferas*.

on Egipta lande" (ll. 27-8), 'This had happened in the country of the Egyptians'. Therefore, the beetles have come as a divine punishment (1) in 'the East' (4) in the past (5).

According to Priebsch (1906-7, p. 147, n. 1), however, the sentence about Egypt is not part of the original. It is a marginal note, he says, evoked by the similarity of the punishments to some of the Egyptian Plagues. It must have crept into the text after some time. I believe that Priebsch neglects the context here. The sermon relates how the people of old did not observe the sacred day. Earlier (Napier, 1883, p. 218, ll. 1-7) 'the Lord' is quoted talking to Moses about the *restendæg*, 'Sabbath'. Hereafter, the text goes on referring to Sunday instead. Because the people did not observe Sunday, punishments were meted out. As example, "Dathon, Abiron and Choreb" (*ibid.*, p. 219, l. 1) are referred to. They did not want to observe Sunday and this is why they sank with their complete families into Hell's Abyss. The story is taken from Nm 16:1-35. However, the transgression described in the *Book of Numbers* is not concerned with the Sabbath but consists of a revolution against Moses and Aaron[514] during the journey through the desert after the escape from Egypt. As the underlying idea of the Sunday Letter is in line with a theme from the Old Testament — the wrath of God will come if Israel does not keep the laws of the covenant (Erlandsson, 1972) — Old Testament punishments are here used as examples and as predecessors to the sanctions for the new commandment. Therefore, I believe that this sentence is no interpolation but part of the general adaptation of Old Testament themes to this new rule. In this way, the eastern origin of the *bruch* can also be explained as having its roots in the Old Testament by association with the Ten Plagues in Egypt.

Finally, the beetles in Hom. B differ from the *brucha* regarding the object they destroy: forests instead of vineyards. In Hom. F the Lord threatens to send beetles on the forests if people do not cease doing wrong and repent. If sent, the beetles will punish the people together with locusts sent on the wheat, *"þæt fornimað eowerne bileofan"* (Priebsch, 1899, p. 136, ll. 50-1), 'so that they take away your food'. This taking away shows some reminiscence of the *brucha* taking away grapes.

Sermon F, moreover, mentions *gnættas*, 'gnats', as well, which aim at 'your' mouths, noses, eyes and ears (Priebsch, 1899, p. 136, ll. 56-8). This is an affirmation of the thought expressed above that *scinifes* are not the same as (wingless) locusts.

In sum, the *brucha* have their parallel in two Old English sermons, in which beetles destroy forests as a divine punishment for people not observing Sunday (1). In one sermon this happened in the East (4) in the past (5),

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[514] A real Sabbath punishment occurs in Nm 15:32-36, commanded by God and meted out by the people to a gatherer of dry sticks. This transgression, but then on a Sunday, is also to be found in Irish texts: in one of 'the three anecdotes on divine punishments' (Meyer, 1901; see above, 3.1) and in ICUC §65 (see 3.3.2.3).

and in the other they (and the locusts) will take away the people's food
(6?).

Finally, in **Old and Middle Irish texts** *brucha* and parallels to some of
their characteristics can be found. A relevant Middle Irish text is the prose
version of SnR. Shortly after the poetical composition, which is dated to
988 (Mac Eoin, 1960-61), a prose version was made (McNamara, 1975, p.
20). It is extant in two recensions, of which the second has been edited and
translated (by Myles Dillon, 1958; Dillon dates Rec. II to about 1100 or
early in the twelfth century; see *ibid.*, p. 3). SnR is a poem about sacred
history from the Creation onwards, as it is found in biblical and apocryphal
material (McNamara, 1975, p. 15). The Ten Plagues occur both in poetry
(SnR XLIII; Stokes, 1883, p. 57) and prose (Dillon, 1958, pp. 24-7[515]),
but it is in Recension I of the prose version that *brucha* can be found. It
should be noted that the Ten Plagues in these versions are identical neither
with those in *Exodus* nor with each other. This variation has its precedent
in the Vulgate: Pss 77 and 104, which also describe the Ten Plagues in
Egypt but give a somewhat different view than the version in Ex.

Recension I of the prose SnR is found in four manuscripts (LB, YBL
— in two different sections, BB and H.2.12 (1309), TCD, nr. 9; see
McNamara, 1975, p. 18); *brucha* are mentioned in four of the five places.
They are — of course — a divine punishment (1); twice they are the
Eighth (YBL 289[b516], LB 118[a]), once the Ninth (H.2.12, p. 2) and once
the Tenth Plague (BB 240[a]). In all four places the *brucha* are large
("*bruiche mora*" in H.2.12; "*bruichi mora*" in YBL; "*bruchi mora*" in
LB; "*bruiche mora*" in BB); they come in the company of poison-
ous/dangerous beasts ("*biasta neme*" in H.2.12; "*biasta nemhe*" in YBL;
"*biasta nemi*" in LB; "*biasda neimhe*" in BB) and they lay waste the
(whole) land.

An innovation in this instance is the indication that the *brucha* are large
and accompanied by poisonous/dangerous beasts[517]. They agree with the
brucha from EÍ in three aspects: the divine punishment (1), the eastern
origin (4) and belonging to the past (5), which is why they can be con-
sidered as variant versions.

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[515] This text also mentions a connection between the Ten Commandments and the
Ten Plagues. After the description of the Ten Plagues it says: "*Ocus is sed
doforne deich-briathar rechta óro fochrothedh in domun iar tain*" (Dillon, 1958,
p. 26), 'And it signifies the Ten Commandments of the Law by which the world
was governed (?) afterwards' (*ibid.*, p. 27). It should be noted that DIL translates
fo-crotha as 'makes quiver, shakes'.

[516] There is a strange mark in the (facsimile of the) manuscript: instead of 'viii' it
gives something which looks like an arabic '9'; perhaps it is an 'a' or 'o' with a
line added. From the context, however, it is clear that it should be something
meaning 'eighth'.

[517] I would like to point out that the *scinifes* in the Latin Sunday Letter P are small
and poisonous. However, I am not able to say anything about the relation between
these two texts.

There is also another interesting aspect of the *brucha* in this text. They are always mentioned in the same context as locusts, with the *brucha* and the locusts usually presented as separate plagues just as in EÍ. There is one exception, but this seems to be in a corrupt text. The deviating text is to be found in LB, where *brucha* and locusts form one plague (the Eighth). It should be noted, however, that the sentence about *brucha* is in the main text and the one about the locusts in the margin. Moreover, in this version the Ninth Plague is absent. Therefore, it could be argued that the locusts should constitute the Ninth Plague. It is possible that a scribe felt the need to harmonise the text in LB with the canonical tradition by explaining these two kinds of beast as one (locust) plague. But then again, this marginal note is not completely in accordance with the biblical plague, for the locusts receive the adjective 'fiery'. This is in EÍ the *bruch*'s third aspect: its fiery eyes.

In TB, many miraculous creations are described. Among them, there are dragons who sleep in the zones of the Seven Heavens (§29). These dragons have breaths of fire, are tower-headed, have diseases on them in their flanks, bring forth the crash of thunders and: "*doinfidet luachtiu di lessaibh sell*" (Stokes, 1905b, p. 110), 'blow lightnings from pupils of eyes' (*ibid.*, p. 111). TB mentions more fiery eyes (see §§98, 99, 104), but they belong to human beings. The dragons are not a divine punishment, nor are they connected with Sunday. The fiery eyes are the only characteristic they share with the *brucha*. It is interesting to note, though, that TB also describes Sunday miracles[518].

Another Middle Irish text — ICUC (§66) — describes monsters that try to pierce boats (see also above, 2.3.2.5). We are not told with what part of their body they do this harm. They might have stings. Just like the small beasts in VC (see above) they live in the sea, but the monsters in ICUC have an extra aspect in common with the *brucha*: they serve as a punishment for sinners. The fact is that they form the last episode in a description of a hellish environment, where people are punished because of their transgression of Sunday observance (1). Moreover, in this hellish environment, iron[519] (2) and fire (3) are used for torment (iron in §53; fire in §§ 53, 61, 63-66). In §64 there are, for instance, black birds with fiery beaks and red fiery talons. ICUC is of great importance in connection with the Sunday rule, but because it gives a close parallel of the fiery horse it will receive more attention in the section that deals with that beast (see 3.3.2.3).

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[518] These are: a flamy sea with thunderous waves that is only in full flood on Sunday and it (the flamy sea) falls asleep on Sunday (§33); the well of Zion that always flows full on Sunday (§39); and stars that run six days and nights until Sunday comes — then they commence many melodies and fall asleep (§88). Cp. the Sunday miracle in ICUC §50, described in 3.3.2.3.

[519] The sentence that describes this is not quite clear to me: "*ba cossa iarainn baí fóthaib*" (Van Hamel, 1941, p. 104), 'and it was iron feet/legs that were under them'.

In ICUC, a robber has a vision of Heaven and Hell. Such a vision is also found in FA[520]: on the feast of John the Baptist, Adomnán's soul leaves his body. He is shown Heaven and Hell by an angel (§3) and after the vision he receives the command to tell what he has seen to lay people and clerics (§31). Iron is presented in this vision as torture material: at the door of the First Heaven two youths/virgins beat the sinners with iron whips[521] as 'the first reproach and suffering' (§15). In Hell there are fiery mountains with poisonous iron spikes, according to the LB version of FA (§30: Colwell, 1952, pp. 281, 312). Fire is mentioned throughout the vision, both in Heaven and Hell. In Heaven it is a means of testing and purification; in Hell it serves as an instrument of torture. Of special interest in this context are, of course, beasts with a fiery aspect: in §21 a parallel of the *bruch*'s third characteristic is present. In a fiery infernal valley live eight beasts (*bíastai*), "*a súli amal bruthu tentidi*" (Colwell, 1952, p. 221), 'their eyes like burning coals[522]' (*ibid.*, p. 222). These beasts are called 'fiery' (*bruthach*) in §22. Again, fiery eyes occur, just as for instance in ApcPe and ApcPa, in a hellish environment. It should be noted that in FA the motif of Sunday respite is given as well, although in this text the rest from torments lasts only three hours (§30).

An Early Middle Irish homily called *Scéla lái brátha*, 'Tidings of Doomsday' (SLB, edition and translation: Stokes, 1879-80; probably composed in the 11th century, according to Kenney, 1929/79, p. 738), also describes divine punishments (1) distributed in Hell. The sinners will have to sit on glowing coals of great fire. They will be tormented with heavy punishments; among them are mentioned dark, eternal fires and hideous fearful iron birds with talons (§20). This text thus gives another example not only of fire but also of birds of iron that are eschatological punishments.

There is similar 'material' (iron and fire) but a completely different context (the Other World instead of Heaven/Hell) in the following text. In AnS a magic bird with an iron beak and a tail of fire is described (O'Grady, 1892, I, p. 129; II, p. 141). The beast is a nuisance to the inhabitants of a *síd* and is killed by Caeilte. There seems to be, however, no relation between this text and EÍ.

Finally, the image of bristles with grapes stuck on them should be considered. When Cú Chulainn gets into his warrior frenzy (*ríastartha(e)*, 'distorted, contorted') his looks turn quite peculiar. (His battle fury was also referred to in 1.3.2, note 166.) There are a few elaborate descriptions of his distortion in TBC, which are very complex. I will here concentrate upon aspects that are parallel to the characteristics of *brucha* and hedgehogs. I will first give the relevant sections (I quote from Recension I of TBC, which is dated to the 11th century, but which has earlier — 8th and

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[520] For more about this text and its possible sources, see Dumville (1977-78).

[521] Fiery whips are mentioned in FA §16 and a stony whip is found in §18.

[522] *Bruth* means '(glowing) mass, lump; charge of metal' (see DIL *s.v. bruth* IIa); the literal translation is, therefore, 'their eyes like fiery masses/lumps'.

10th century — strata; Mac Eoin, 1982, pp. 114-5) and then connect these with the earlier described sources about *brucha* and hedgehogs.

In a description of Cú Chulainn's distortion in ll. 1651-7 it is said that his hero's flame (*lón*[523] *láith*) springs forth. His hair is mentioned too:

"Nach findae bíd fair ba   "Every hair on him would be as
háthithir delc sciach   sharp as a spike of hawthorn
7 banna fola for cach finnu"   and there would be a drop of blood
                                          on every hair"
(O'Rahilly, 1976a, p. 51, l. 1654-5)   (*ibid.*, p. 171).

In another description (ll. 2245-78) the fiery aspect can be found too. Fiery flakes come from his throat into his mouth (*ibid.*, p. 187); "sparks of blazing fire" are to be seen above his head in the air (*ibid.*) and his hero's light is mentioned. Even more relevant is the description of his hair:

"Ra chasnig a folt imma c[h]end   "His hair curled about his head
imar craíbred ndergscíach   like branches of red hawthorn
i mbernaid at[h]álta.   used to re-fence a gap in a hedge.
Ce ro crateá rígaball fó   If a noble apple-tree weighed down
rígthorad immi iss ed mod dá   with fruit had been shaken about his
rísad ubull díb dochum talman taris   hair, scarcely one apple would have
                                          reached the ground through it,
acht ro sesed ubull   but an apple would have stayed
for cach óenfinna and   impaled on each separate hair
re frithchassad na ferge atracht dá   because of the fierce bristling of his
fult úaso"   hair above his head"
(*ibid.*, p. 69, ll. 2268-72)   (*ibid.*, p. 187[524]).

Somewhat further (ll. 2341-66) Cú Chulainn's beautiful appearance is

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[523] See DIL *s.v.* 2. *lúan*.

[524] This is followed by a description of Cú Chulainn's scythed chariot and his horses (O'Rahilly, 1976a, pp. 69 (ll. 2279-91), 188). One of the words referring to the horses is *biruích* (l. 2288), 'with pricked ears'. LL reads here: *bruiche*, which O'Rahilly emends into *biruich* (*id.*, 1976b, pp. 196, 197 n. 3). She explains this word as the plural of *bir-oach* (*ibid.*, p. 200). (For other instances see DIL, *s.v. berach*, to which one more example could be added, where a similar description of Cú Chulainn's horses is given: *biruich* in *Siaburcharpat Con Culaind*, 'The demoniac chariot of Cú Chulainn' (ScCC; edition of the text in LU: Best, Bergin, 1929, pp. 278-87; edition of the text in Eg 88, collated with Add 33993: Meyer, 1910b, pp. 48-56; edition and translation of the LU text: O'Beirne Crowe, 1870-71, pp. 375-401, see pp. 376-7. The language of this text "is compatible with a roughly ninth- or tenth-century date"; McCone, 1990, p. 200.). This word cannot therefore be connected with the plural form *bruiche* — of *bruch* — as found in the prose SnR (cp. above). As mentioned above (note 174), Oskamp (1970, pp. 146-7) translates "*in beist birich*" as 'the sharp-backed beast' (ICMD §23).

described. Here, a comparison with the hedgehog is made[525]:

"Secht meóir cechtar a dá choss,   "Seven toes on each of his feet;
secht meóir cechtar a dá lám   seven fingers on each of his hands
co ngabáil ingni sebaic,   with the grasp of a hawk's claws
co forgabáil ingne griúin   and the grip of a hedgehog's claws
ar cach n-aí fo leith díib-sin"   in each separate toe and finger"
(O'Rahilly, 1976a, p. 71, ll. 2351-3) (*ibid.*, p. 190).

Griúin was earlier translated as 'griffin' (by Faraday), Cecile O'Rahilly (1976a, p. 272) points out[526]. However, she rejects this translation, because the word *gríbín*, a diminutive of *gríb*, 'griffin', upon which *griúin* was probably based, does not seem to be attested, nor is the spelling *u* = *bh* elsewhere in this text. She bases her translation upon O'Clery, who glosses: "*griun .i. graineóg*, 'a hedgehog'" (*ibid*). In my opinion, the image of a griffin with its frightful claws would make more sense, and moreover gives a good parallel with the hawk. But in the light of this study about connections between *brucha*, hedgehogs and Cú Chulainn the comparison with a hedgehog is also quite interesting.

I will now connect these characteristics with what was found earlier in other sources about *brucha* and hedgehogs. The hair (*finna*) of the *brucha* in EÍ are iron bristles (*delgi*). The word for these bristles, *delg*, 'thorn; pin, brooch; peg, spike, nail, pointed implement', is also used in the first of the quotations about Cú Chulainn. Every hair (*finnae*) of his head is compared with the spike (*delg*) of a *scé* (later: *scech*), 'a thorn bush, whitethorn'. In the second quotation the image is somewhat different: his curly hair (*folt*) is compared with branches of a red hawthorn (*dergscé*). Just like the *brucha*, Cú Chulainn has spiky hair (2) to which fruit can adhere (6). The fiery aspect of the *brucha* (their eyes; 3) has a remote parallel in Cú Chulainn's fiery characteristics. There is also a link between this hero and hedgehogs, especially as described by Pliny. I translated the *poma* that the hedgehog carried on its bristles as 'fruit', but 'apples' is another of its meanings. Therefore, this image might have been borrowed from Pliny. The second point of comparison is the image of Cú Chulainn's toes and fingers, given in the fourth quotation. But, as was said above, there is some uncertainty about how to translate *griúin*.

It is now interesting to adduce an earlier mentioned text: PB and a Middle Irish version called *Pais Partholoin*, 'The Passion of Bartholomew' (PP; edition and translation: Atkinson, 1887, pp. 95-101, 339-46). The devil in the Latin text was said to have fiery eyes and prickly wings like a porcupine. The Irish text is not the same: the devil is, for instance, called 'a huge Ethiopian[527]' (*ibid*., pp. 100, 344). It is the same in that he has a fiery aspect and spiky wings, but there is no comparison with a porcupine:

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[525] I am indebted to John Carey, who gave me this reference.
[526] O'Beirne Crowe (1870-71, p. 431) translates *griúin* as 'crane'.
[527] Cp. NBA §7 where a devil is described as a small Ethiopian (see 3.3.2.5).

"ruisc thenntemla occa;   "his eyes were fiery,
ticed lassar borb as a   and a fierce flame issued from his
bragait 7 as a shróin,   throat[528] and his nose,
amal lassair shuirnn tened, (...)   like the fire of the furnace of
                                           fire[529]; (...)
etteda delgnecha amal sciaich fair"   on him are wings as thorny as a
                                           briar"
(Atkinson, 1887, p. 100)   (*ibid.*, p. 344).

The differences with the above-mentioned Latin text are obvious; important is the replacement of the porcupine with the *scé*, which was also used in the image applied to Cú Chulainn. It is remarkable that the texts in Irish do not give words for a hedgehog (if *griúin* is to be dismissed). Was the animal not known? J.P. Mallory (1992, p. 115) points out that the *ubull* and the *scé* are among the native Irish flora. The hedgehog, however, seems to be a late introduction to Ireland from the Norman period or later; the earliest evidence is from the 13th century (*ibid.*, p. 117). Incidentally, Mallory (*ibid.*) also wonders whether *griun* really means 'hedgehog'.

Cú Chulainn is not the only man with this remarkable characteristic: the motif can also be found in TBDD. Two other men are described in almost the same way: Fer Caille (TBBD §38) and Tuidle of Ulaid (§85). They have rough-cropt hair (*mael garb*). If a sack of wild apples (*fiadubla*) were thrown onto their hair (*finnae*), every apple would stick to their hair; not one would fall on the ground. I consider this motif of apples stuck on bristly hair (TBDD, TBC) as a variant version of the grapes on bristles/hair (EÍ[530]).

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[528] Atkinson translates 'neck', but in the light of what is said in the original Latin text I believe this alternative translation of *brága*, 'neck, throat, gullet', is to be preferred.

[529] Atkinson translates 'like the fire of the furnace of hell', but the word 'Hell' is not found in the Irish text.

[530] Sermon XXXIV in Atkinson's (1887, pp. 245-59, 478-95) collection of passions and homilies is about the Ten Commandments. The text is beyond this study's scope as it is Early Modern Irish: Gearóid Mac Eoin dates the text to the 14th century because of its many English and French loan words (UCG, 19-11-1993). However, I would like to advert to certain aspects of it which are connected with the material so far presented. Several Bible texts and St Augustine are quoted in the explanation of this commandment. Quite a few of them are incorrect: for instance, according to this sermon the story about the transgressor of the Sabbath Commandment is found in Nm 25, which should be Nm 15 (Atkinson, 1887, pp. 246, 480). Dealing with the Third Commandment (here Sunday observance), the sermon describes things allowed on Sunday as well: works of the soul, for instance, works of mercy (*trócaire*) in general. This may perhaps be connected with EÍ §5, in which mercy is demanded. The text reads *na dómnaige* (Atkinson, 1887, p. 246), which Atkinson translates as "the Sabbath days" (*ibid.*, p. 480). However, the Irish language has a specific word for this concept: *sabbait*, which is used somewhat further on into this homily. Therefore, Atkinson emends the

text by his translation, but apparently it was no problem to the homilist to mix Sabbath and Sunday. Compare also his enigmatic way of quoting the Bible. Locusts with wings and without are compared with transgressors of the Eighth Commandment (bear no false witness). The author of this homily knew the meaning of the word *bruchus* and shows his knowledge here: "*7 atbeir Isaias fáid, 'co ra-b casmail fer na leth-fhiadnaise fris-in béist re n-abar locusta (7 brucus a hainm, co fhásait sciathana forri, 7 mar fhásait, is locusta, quasi longa hasta atberar fria) (...)*" (*ibid.*, p. 254), 'And the prophet Isaiah saith that the man who bears false witness is like the beast *locusta* [or its name is *bruchus* till wings grow on it, and when they grow, it gets its name *locusta*, i.e. *longa hasta*] (...)' (*ibid.*, p. 489). Again, the reference to Isaiah is strange. Both *bruchus* and *locusta* are each used only once in the *Book of Isaiah*. God threatens the people in Is 33:4 that their spoils will be gathered together just as the wingless locusts, when the ditches are full of them. Furthermore, in Is 40:22 the locust is a symbol of insignificance, with which the earth-dwellers are compared. Locusts are used to symbolise either numerousness, insignificance or transitoriness in the Vulgate, but nowhere are they used to designate false witnesses. This image can, however, be found in the above-mentioned sermons of St Augustine and Caesarius of Arles. The etymological explanation of *locusta* is in accordance with the one given by Isidore (see below, 3.3.2.2). The sermon mentions that this is Egypt's Eighth Plague and then it briefly says that the Ten Plagues correspond with the Ten Commandments, but only in this context (the Eighth Commandment) is it made explicit: "*(...) 7 is í plág fhreccras d'aithne na leth-fiadnaise díb .i. locusta, uair atat tri nadúire ico'n péist-si, 7 samailter fria duine iat: in cet náduir, is urchoitech a fiacla, uair gerraid sí 'n-a cínd toraid 7 guirt 7 finemain di-a fiaclaib, (...)*" (*ibid.*, pp. 254-5), 'well, the plague that corresponds to this commandment about false witness is the locust, for this beast has three natures that are compared to such offenders (lit.: ... three natures and they are compared to a human being, JB): the first characteristic is that its teeth are hurtful, inasmuch as it bites off by the head fruits and vegetables and vines with its teeth (...)' (*ibid.*, p. 490). Likewise, the false witness destroys people with the tongue. The other two characteristics are: the number in which the locusts come — compared with the world full of liars — and the onslaught in summer — winter is for locusts what death is for sinners, who are then in Hell. Again, the sinners are connected with the beasts, but now in a physical way: the locusts become their torturers: "*Is demin din, ol in t-apstal, ci-b é bus casmail fris-in béist-si is-in t-shaegul, bíd di-a phianaib a n-iffern na pésti-sin fesin ic cocnam a fhola 7 a fheola do gnath, comfhat fri Dia er nim*" (*ibid.*, p. 255), 'It is certain, therefore, saith the apostle, that whoever during his lifetime is like this beast, shall have, as part of his suffering in hell, those same beasts gnawing his flesh and sucking his blood continually, as long as God is in heaven' (*ibid.*, p. 490). Therefore, this sermon mentions both locusts with wings and without (whereas the other plagues are omitted). Furthermore, not only the *bruch*'s target occurs — the vine and fruit (*torad*; the word by which the grapes are referred to, in which the *bruch* rolls about) but also the locust's: the word *guirt*, translated as 'vegetables' by Atkinson, actually means 'a field; a corn-crop, standing corn' (see DIL, *s.v.* 1 *gort*). This homily offers variant versions of the *brucha* and the locusts in EÍ; perhaps the homilist used EÍ as one of the sources for this sermon. The last aspect of the locusts in the sermon is not unimportant. Their function in Hell is an example of

In conclusion, it is obvious that several texts influenced the *bruch*'s formation, which itself led to variant versions and parallel images. As a general source to the first aspect — divine punishment — the Vulgate is to be considered. More specifically, Latin versions of the Letter will have been its source for the aspect of divine punishment related to Sunday observance. Beetles are a divine punishment for the transgression of Sunday observance in Old English sermons, but they might be based upon a Latin source, just as EÍ. Finally, the line developed in the Vulgate — *bruchi* as one of the Ten Plagues — is taken up and elaborated upon in the prose SnR Rec. I.

The second aspect — iron bristles — turns out to be a characteristic peculiar to the *bruch*, even though the *bruchus* has prickles and more monsters with iron body parts can be found in the Vulgate. Iron is important in apocalyptic texts (both canonical and non-canonical), for instance as an instrument of punishment. Fearful iron birds with talons are mentioned among the many infernal torments described in SLB. Aethicus Ister refers to wingless locusts with iron claws. Other variations on the bristles can be found in a Latin Letter and an Old English sermon in which poisonous *scinifes* and *gnættas* respectively can be found (compare the poisonous beasts from the prose SnR Rec. I). Dangerous beasts, small and large, occur in VC and ICUC: the former have stings, the latter are a punishment (connected with Sunday observance?), but these two kinds are more remote from the *brucha*.

The third aspect — fiery eyes — are a special characteristic of the *brucha* as well, although there are unnamed beasts that emit sparks from their eyes in the *Book of Wisdom* and other fiery eyes in apocalyptic texts in the Vulgate. Furthermore, there is a *bruchus* with fiery wings in a gloss on the *Psalms* and fiery locusts mentioned in connection with the *brucha* in the margin of one manuscript of the prose SnR Rec. I. Fiery eyes are found in eschatological and hellish contexts (ApcPa, VisEz, FA, and perhaps in ApcPe), therefore they are connected with punishment as well. Eyes flashing forth bolts of lightning are, however, also given in a cosmological context (the 'weather dragons' in TB).

The eastern origin (4) and the setting in the past (5) are to be traced to Egypt's Ten Plagues. In this way wingless locusts are described in the Vulgate, Latin Letters, Old English sermons and the prose SnR Rec. I. Moreover, one Latin Letter mentions them as punishment for the disregard of Sunday in Jerusalem in the past and a few Latin Letters give the past tense in Jesus's direct speech.

The final aspect can in general be traced to the Vulgate: in the *Book of Joel* the vineyards are destroyed by the *bruchus*. A more precise parallel is to be found in Pliny's NH, the *Physiologus*, Isidore's *Etymologiae* and in a gloss on the *Psalms*. The description of grapes and bristles is here con-

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the idea that infernal punishments correspond to the sins committed on earth. I will return to this concept in connection with some of the other monsters (see below, 3.3.2.3 and 3.3.2.4).

nected with the hedgehog (*ericius*), which can be linked with the wingless
locust via another instance of divine punishment: *eruca/erugo*. Perhaps the
bruch was conceived of as a wormlike beast (*vermis, eruca/erugo*) with
bristles (associated with *ericius*) and connected with the locust. Latin
Letters give the fruit as the wingless locust's target and one Old English
homily has them carry away the people's food. Variant versions are found
in TBC and TBDD, where the image is given of apples stuck on hair. Cú
Chulainn in TBC is especially interesting in this context: he has, just as the
bruch, a fiery aspect and descriptions are given of either drops of blood or
apples on his hair. His bristly hair, however, is compared not with the
bristles of a hedgehog but with a thorn bush. This is analogous with a
description of a devil in the Latin PB: the prickly wings of a fiery devil
compared with a porcupine become in the Irish version PP prickly as a
thornbush.

There are, thus, numerous clues for the *bruch* in older texts. The Irish
author combined the data. It will be evident that I disagree with Robert
Priebsch, who characterises the *brucha* (and the locusts) as "*der natürliche
Ausfluß lebendiger keltischer Einbildungskraft*" (1906-7, p. 145), 'the
natural outcome of lively Celtic imagination'. Enough sources that the
author of EÍ could have used are presented here. This does not mean that
the *bruch* should be considered as a monster of the 'imported' kind: the
author combined the sources in such a creative way that the beast falls into
the category of 'integration'.

3.3.2.2 The locusts

Locustae/Lucustae occur more often than *bruchi* in the **Vulgate**. They
serve as a sign of insignificance, numerousness or transitoriness, but above
all as a symbol of destruction. God punishes the people by sending locusts
if they do not obey God's commandments. There are special locust plagues
(Ioel 1-2; Am 7:1; Apc 9:3-11), of which the Egyptian is the most famous
(Ex 10:4-19; Ps 77:46; 104:34; Sap 16:9), but locusts also serve as a
general divine punishment (Dt 28:38; III Rg 8:37; II Par 6:28; 7:13).
Therefore, it seems highly probable that the first aspect of EÍ's locusts —
divine punishment — should be traced to the Vulgate.

The Latin Bible also offers clues for the second aspect — their eastern
origin. In Ex 10:13 the locusts are supplied by *ventus urens*, 'a burning
wind[531]', and a West wind drives them into the Red Sea (Ex 10:19). In
the *Book of Judges* (6:5; 7:12) and the *Book of Judith* (2:11), nations[532]
from the East[533] are compared with numerous locusts that alight and lay
waste the land. Perhaps these texts played a part in localising the (*brucha*

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[531] The Hebrew text reads: רוח קדים, 'East wind' (Ex 10:13).
[532] In the Bible the occupation of Israel by foreign nations is usually interpreted as
a divine punishment.
[533] Twice a Northern nation is designated by locust symbolism (Ier 46:23-24; Ioel
2:20).

and) locusts in the East.

A survey of biblical monsters with iron body parts was given above
(3.3.2.1). There are no locusts with iron wings — their third aspect — in
the Vulgate, but there might be some connection with apocalyptic monsters
that have iron parts of the body as well, especially with the *lucustae* from
Apc 9. As will be shown these locusts play an important part in the
imagery of the Sunday Letter, which is why their description will be given
here. When the fifth trumpet has sounded the fifth angel opens the Pit of
the Abyss. Smoke comes from the Pit like the smoke of a large furnace
and the sun and air are darkened because of this. Out of the smoke, locusts
go forth upon the earth. They are given the power of scorpions with which
they will punish those people[534] who do not have God's sign (*signum*) on
their forehead. They will not kill but torture them in the way scorpions
sting. The people will desire and seek death but will not find it. Death will
flee from them (Apc 9:1-6). These locusts[535] are monstrous:

"et similitudines lucustarum	And the likeness of the locusts was
similes equis paratis in proelium	similar to horses ready for battle
et super capita earum tamquam	and on their heads something like
coronae similes auro	crowns similar to gold
et facies earum sicut facies hominum	and their faces were like human faces
et habebant capillos sicut	and they had hair like
capillos mulierum	women's hair
et dentes earum sicut leonum erant	and their teeth were like lions' (teeth)
et habebant loricas sicut	and they had cuirasses like
loricas ferreas	iron cuirasses
et vox alarum earum sicut	and the sound of their wings was like
vox curruum equorum multorum	the sound of many chariots with
currentium in bellum	horses rushing to war
et habebant caudas similes	and they had tails like (those) of
scorpionum	scorpions
et aculei in caudis earum	and stings in their tails
potestas earum nocere hominibus	their power was to harm the people
mensibus quinque	for five months
et habebant super se regem[536]	and they had as king over them

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[534] Contrary to normal locusts, these monstrous beings are said to be commanded
not to damage the vegetation; neither hay (*faenum*) nor any green thing (*viride*)
nor any tree (*arbor*; Apc 9:4).

[535] This vision seems to have had some of its inspiration from the *Book of Joel*:
here the strong and numerous people, with which locusts seem to be meant, are
also compared with horses (Ioel 2:4). Their teeth are like lions' teeth (1:6); their
noise is similar to that of chariots, fire and a strong people prepared for battle
(2:5). The people will be tormented by their presence (2:6). Their coming will be
on a day of darkness (2:2): sun, moon and stars will be darkened (2:10).

[536] This is an opposition to natural locusts that have no king (Prv 30:27).

angelum abyssi[537]
cui nomen hebraice Abaddon[538]
graece autem Apollyon[539]
et latine habet nomen
Exterminans[540]"
(Apc 9:7-11).

the Angel of the Abyss
whose name in Hebrew is Abaddon
in Greek, however, Apollyon
and in Latin Exterminans (Destroyer)

Therefore, these locusts harm people with their tails and their wings make noise. Being a divine punishment they have something in common with the locusts from ÉÍ but cannot be seen as their predecessors. I will, however, return to them when dealing with the five monsters from Hell (see 3.3.2.5).

Their final characteristic — the destruction of everything that crosses their path, especially the wheat — accords with the biblical image. The object of destruction by biblical locusts is 'everything' (Ex 10:5, 15; Dt 28:38) or the earth (II Par 7:13). Sometimes it is specified: trees (*ligna*; Ex 10:5, 15), herbs (*herba*; Ex 10:12, 15; Am 7:1-2), fruit (*poma*; Ex 10:15 and *fructus*; Ps 104:35), work — signifying agricultural products — (*labores*; Ps 77:46) and hay (*faenum*; Ps 104:35). In the *Book of Joel* there is an extensive enumeration, in which the wheat is mentioned twice. The following objects will be destroyed: vine and fig (*vinea, ficus*; Ioel 1:7); wheat, wine and oil (*triticum, vinum, oleum*; Ioel 1:10); corn, barley and the harvest (*frumentum, hordeum, messis*; Ioel 1:11); again vine and fig, together with pomegranate, palm, apple and all kinds of tree (*malogranatum, palma, malum, omnia ligna*; Ioel 1:12) and, finally, the wheat again (Ioel 1:17). Although in the *Book of Joel bruchus* and *locusta* are neither presented in pairs nor connected with vine and wheat respectively as they are in ÉÍ, these four phenomena can be found in the first chapter of this book. Locusts aim at human beings in two texts (Sap 16:9 and Apc 9:4), which differs from what is said in ÉÍ.

Locusts in the Vulgate resemble those in the Irish Sunday Letter in the

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[537] In the Greek version of *I Enoch* it is the Archangel Uriel "who is over the world and Tartarus" (I En 20:2; Charlesworth, 1983, p. 23, n. 20c). In SibOr, Uriel opens the Underworld: "Then Uriel, the great angel, will break the gigantic bolts, of unyielding and unbreakable steel, of the gates of Hades, not forged of metal; he will throw them wide open (...)" (SibOr 2:227-229). In ApcPe, Uriel is ordained by God "over the rising again of the dead at the day of judgement" (James, 1924/89, p. 513). However, in ApcAb this act is ascribed to the Angel Iaoel, who says: "I am appointed to hold the Leviathans, because through me is subjugated the attack and menace of every reptile. I am ordered to loosen Hades and to destroy those who wondered at the dead" (ApcAb 10:10-11). For more about this, see Peterson (1959, p. 298, n. 51 and 52).

[538] אבדון means 'destruction, Abyss' and can be found in the Hebrew Bible in Job 26:6; 28:22; 31:12; Ps 88:12 and Prv 15:11. In the Vulgate, 'Abaddon' is only given in this text.

[539] 'Ἀπολλύων means 'Apollyon, the Destroyer'.

[540] The phrase about the Latin name is, of course, absent in the Greek original.

following respects: as a divine punishment (1), coming from the East (2) and as destroyers of everything, including the wheat (4). Their iron wings (3) have a parallel in the iron body parts of monsters from apocalyptic traditions.

Locusts can also be found in **non-canonical scripture**. Quoted above (3.3.2.1) were locusts (mentioned without any further information) which serve as a divine punishment (1) in *III Baruch*, but this text is unlikely to have influenced the Western versions of the Sunday Letter directly.

Furthermore, in Book V of the *Sibylline Oracles* (80 — 130 AD; J.J. Collins in Charlesworth, 1983, p. 390, n. 5) it is announced that a "not inconsiderable swarm of locusts will destroy the land of Cyprus" (SibOr 5:454). This is another representation of locusts as a divine punishment (1).

The Ten Plagues that include locusts are referred to in *Jubilees* 48:5 (second century BC), which offers no new information. The same is true of *Artapanus* 3.27:32 (third to second century BC) and *Ezekiel the Tragedian*, *Exagōgē* 145-146 (second century BC[541]).

Pastor Hermae — already mentioned in 2.3.2.1 — is written in the form and style of an apocalypse, but its contents are about morality (see the discussion of this text by Philipp Vielhauer and Georg Strecker in Schneemelcher, 1904/89, pp. 537-47). Only in its fourth vision is apocalyptic material to be found (*ibid.*, p. 542). In this vision (edition of the Greek and Latin text: Von Gebhardt, Harnack, 1877, pp. 58-67), first a cloud of dust (*pulvis*, 'dust', but also 'ashes') is seen that fills the sky. The text's mentioning of the cloud becoming larger and larger and then the sun breaking through would appear to indicate an eclipse of the sun. Hermas sees a giant beast like a sea monster (θηρίον μέγιστον ὡσεὶ κῆτός τι; *magnam bestiam quasi aliquem cetum*; *ibid.*, pp. 60-1[542]). From its mouth fiery locusts (ἀκρίδες πύριναι; *locustae igneae*; *ibid.*) go forth (Vis. IV, 1, 5-6[543]). Afterwards a virgin explains the beast to Hermas, but she

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[541] There is a Latin translation of the first text mentioned here; the second and third are extant in Greek. Details about all three texts and their translations can be found in Charlesworth (1985). For the edition of the three texts, see Denis (in: Black, Denis, 1970, pp. 70-102, 186-95, 207-16).

[542] Erik Peterson explains the enormous monster as the Underworld (lit. "*Gehinnom*"; Peterson, 1959, p. 299) comparing it with the large smoky/misty dragon from the *Acts of Philip* which has "a belly like coals of brass in *sparkles of fire*" (James, 1924/89, p. 447; italics mine; see also 2.3.2.1 and 3.3.2.5 about the symbolism of a huge monster as the Underworld/Hell). The beast is also explained as the mythical monster that has been chained since Creation and that will be set free at the End of the world (Vielhauer and Strecker in Schneemelcher, 1904/89, p. 543). The text itself explains the monster as an image of a future disaster.

[543] In Apc 16:13 three unclean spirits like frogs (*ranae*) come from the mouths of the dragon, the beast and the false prophet. (See also 3.3.2.5.)

omits the locusts (Vis. IV, 2-3[544]).

According to Vielhauer and Strecker (in Schneemelcher, 1904/89, p. 543), these locusts are eschatological plagues. Peterson (1959, p. 299) compares them with the monstrous locusts of Apc 9. There are indeed some similarities: smoke or a cloud of dust/ashes; an eclipse of the sun and the coming of locusts (from the Abyss/a large monster). The locusts in the *Apocalypse of John* are, however, not explicitly characterised as fiery, although one could perhaps infer this from their association with smoke[545]. The locusts from *Pastor Hermae* might be related to the locusts from the *Apocalypse of John* and the former share with the locusts from EÍ that they should be seen against a biblical background, but one cannot maintain that there is a direct relation between them. Their fiery aspect is noteworthy, but in EÍ *brucha* are characterised as such (because of their fiery eyes).

In sum, there are instances of locusts as divine punishment (1) located in the East (2) in non-canonical texts, which are further examples of the Ten Plagues tradition. There are no new clues for this punishment coming from the East nor are there examples of locusts with iron wings (3). The description of iron in apocalyptic texts as a torture instrument in a hellish environment, described above in connection with the *bruch*, of course applies here as well. Obviously, the locusts are destructive in this kind of text but nowhere is the wheat mentioned explicitly (4).

As stated above (3.3.2.1), **Isidore** compares the locust with the caterpillar (*eruca*): a caterpillar does not fly off like the locust (*Etymologiae* XII.5.9). Isidore categorises the locust among small winged/flying beings (XII.8 *De minutis volatilibus*). He explains its name by connecting *longus* (*pes*) with *hasta* (spear): *locusta* owes its name to the fact that it is just as a spear with its long legs ("*Locusta, quod pedibus sit longis veluti asta*"; XII.8.9[546]). This is all the information Isidore gives. Therefore, there is only one similarity with the locust from EÍ: its wings, but this is an ordinary biological fact.

Pliny (NH VIII.43.104) enumerates the locust among the destructive species: a community of Africans was put to flight by them. In his book about insects (XI), Pliny gives an extensive description of the locust (NH XI.35.101-7). Some details in this section are noteworthy:

"deorum irae pestis ea intellegitur;   "This plague is interpreted as a sign

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[544] Silverstein (1935, p. 67) connects this large monster, which he calls "Hegrin, the dragon of the Abyss", with the dragon Parthemon from ApcPa. Incidentally, he mistranslates *locustae* as 'scorpions' (*ibid.*). (For more about the dragon from the redactions of ApcPa, see 3.3.2.5.)

[545] Compare the mysterious beasts in Sap 11:19, which are connected with smoke and/or sparks.

[546] For Isidore's reference to the Greek language, see André (1986, p. 293, n. 608).

of the wrath of the gods;

namque et grandiores cernuntur
for they are seen of exceptional size,

et tanto volant pinnarum stridore
and also they fly with such a noise of wings

ut alites credantur,
that they are believed to be birds,

solemque obumbrant,
and they obscure the sun,

sollicitis suspectantibus populis
making the nations gaze upward in anxiety

ne suas operiant terras.
lest they should settle all over their lands.

(...) inmensos tractus permeant
(...) they pass over immense tracts of land

diraque messibus nube contegunt,
and cover them with a cloud disastrous for the crops,

multa contactu adurentes,
scorching up many things with their touch

omnia vero morsu erodentes
and gnawing away everything with their bite,

et fores quoque tectorum"
(Rackham, 1940/83, p. 496)
even the doors of the houses as well"
(*ibid.*, p. 497).

The interpretation of locust plagues as a divine punishment is given; locusts are compared with birds; their wings make an awful noise and they eclipse the sun (compare Apc 9) and their destruction is described by a word for burning, scorching (*adurere*). These characteristics should be viewed as belonging to a common set of ideas which were used in several texts; Pliny's text cannot be seen as a source for EÍ, as the differences are abundant.

As described above (3.3.2.1), the locust is mentioned in *Cosmographia* as a highly destructive beast, together with the *bruchus*, *tinea* and *formica arabica*. These four demolish walls with their iron claws (Wuttke, 1853, p. 27). The text is obscure, but the similarity of iron claws and iron wings is immediately apparent.

In the **Latin Sunday Letter**, locusts (*locustae*) incorporating the first aspect — as divine punishment (connected with the non-observance of Sunday) — occur in Ta, L1, M2, Tou and V. Only once are they mentioned without the wingless locusts, and on this occasion they are found among other punishment threats: earthquakes, pestilence, famine, destruction of the whole earth, hail and serpents (M2; Priebsch, 1895, p. 60).

Regarding the second characteristic — their eastern origin — there is the same clue as in the case of the *brucha*: the locust plague which had afflicted Jerusalem (M2).

Nowhere in the Latin versions have the locusts iron wings. Therefore, the third aspect is absent.

The aims of destruction are not different from the ones mentioned above in the section about the wingless locusts: both the vegetation (fruit in Ta and V; hay, tree-bark and foliage in M2) and the people ('you' in M2

and Tou; the people in L1) are mentioned.

Summarising: in the Latin versions of the Letter, locusts serve as a divine punishment when people do not observe Sunday (1). Usually they are in the company of wingless locusts *(bruchi)*. Once they are located in the East (2), but they are never said to have iron wings (3). They are sent to the people and destroy the vegetation, but they are not explicitly connected with the wheat (4).

Locusts occur in **Hiberno-Latin texts**, but the references that the Database[547] supplied are not relevant to this study: they are mainly commentaries on the Bible, referring especially to John the Baptist's food[548]. In this material the locust is sometimes classified as a bird. For instance, *Expositio quatuor evangeliorum*, 'Explanation of the Four Gospels' (dated to the end of the 7th century; Lapidge, Sharpe, 1985, p. 97), has: *"miserrimæ aves sunt"* (Migne, 1865, col. 556), 'they are very lamentable/bad birds', with reference to locusts. Locusts are also called birds in two of EÍ's manuscripts (see 3.3.1) and in the gloss on Ps 104:34 from Codex Palatinus Latinus (see 3.3.2.1) the locust is characterised as an *avis parva*, 'small bird', as well — albeit without wings. This classification will turn up again in texts discussed below and should perhaps be explained by the fact that locusts fly, as Pliny indicates.

This gloss on Ps 104:34 (quoted above, see 3.3.2.1) contains information about the locust (McNamara, 1986, p. 219). There is some similarity with the aspects of the locusts from EÍ. The divine punishment (1) is represented by the fact that the gloss belongs to Ps 104, in which the Ten Plagues are described. This is a punishment administered in the East, in Egypt (2). However, the gloss calls the locust a small bird without wings. It moves upon the earth, perhaps as a hopper. In any case, this is contrary to the description of the locust in EÍ with its iron wings (3). The locust's final aspect is again in accordance with EÍ's locusts: the beast destroys ears of grain (4).

Two things in this gloss are noteworthy: first, the etymological explanation of *locusta* differs from Isidore's. Instead of with *(longa) hasta*, the animal's name is connected with *loco stans*, 'staying in a place'. This is not something one would expect from locusts, which are infamous for their migration. This etymology is also to be found in a text contemporaneous with the glosses: *Sancti Gregorii Magni Vita*, 'The Life of St Gregory the Great', by Paul the Deacon (720/724 — 799?). Gregory was running away from Rome, being reluctant to become pope. On his way he sits down to read. Suddenly a locust jumps on his page and then remains still. Gregory considers this a sign interpreting *locusta* as *loco sta*[549], 'stay in the place', after which he retraces his steps (Migne, 1862, col. 51,

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[547] I consulted the Database of Medieval Latin from Celtic Sources in April 1993.
[548] John the Baptist lived on locusts and wild honey; see Mt 3:4 and Mc 1:6.
[549] It should be noted that the gloss gives the etymology as *loco stans*, whereas Paul the Deacon writes *loco sta*.

§20). I do not know whether this tradition was known to the glossator of the *Psalms*, but the narrative can serve as elucidation of the aspect of staying still.

Second, the classification of the beast as a bird is also found in the Irish translation of this text: *Betha Grighora*, 'The Life of Gregory' (edition and translation: Vendryes, 1925), where this episode about the locust occurs too (*ibid.*, pp. 132-3, §7[550]). But this classification should be traced to other sources, perhaps like the above-mentioned *Expositio quatuor evangeliorum*, as the Irish *Life* is dated to a period after the 11th century (*ibid.*, p. 125, n. 1).

There seems to be some relation between the gloss and the two versions of Gregory's *Life*. According to Joseph Vendryes (1926, p. 451), there is also a relation between EÍ and *Betha Grighora*: first, he maintains that the bird called *locusta* from EÍ also appears in the Irish *Life of Gregory*: "(...) la mention de l'oiseau dénommé *locusta* [in EÍ] (...), qui apparaît dans le *Betha Grighora* (...)". Second, another similarity between EÍ and *Betha Grighora* is that sinners are not punished in Hell on Sunday (Vendryes, 1926, p. 451). It is true that locusts and the motif of Sunday respite occur in the two texts, but more study is needed if these texts are to be connected directly. The locusts in EÍ are, for instance, destructive monsters serving as a punishment, whereas the locust in the two versions of the *Life of Gregory* is an animal serving as a sign. Their function, meaning and appearance are too different for them to be connected directly.

To conclude this section: the locust as described in the gloss on Ps 104:34 shares three aspects with the locusts in EÍ. Only the characteristic of 'iron wings' has no parallel.

The two **Old English homilies** (B and F) that supplied parallels for the *brucha* describe locusts as well, designated by the word *gershoppa*[551], 'locust, grasshopper' (Napier, 1883, p. 221, ll. 8, 20; Priebsch, 1899, p. 136, l. 50). The locusts serve as a divine punishment for not observing Sunday (1).

In B they are localised in the East (2). They are sent to Egypt by 'the Lord', when the beetles fail to force people into Sunday observance (see above, 3.3.2.1).

Their wings are not mentioned. There is, therefore, no parallel for the iron wings (3).

The locusts are mentioned twice in B, where they are sent down on the wheat (4) in the first instance. The second time they eat virtually all the fruit of the earth, but for a small part. In F they will also be sent on 'your' wheat, taking away 'your' food.

There is an obvious relation with the Irish Letter: the locusts appear

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[550] Cp. also Flower (1926/92, p. 442).

[551] Once, they are called *wunderlice gershoppan stapan*, 'wonderful grasshoppers, locusts' (Napier, 1883, p. 221, l. 20).

immediately after the beetles/*brucha* as punishment for the transgression of Sunday observance. In B they have come in the past in Egypt, which may explain the eastern origin. The wheat is mentioned among the things they destroy in both B and F. The iron wings, however, remain without a parallel.

Locusts can be found in the following **Middle Irish texts**. As described above (*sub* Hiberno-Latin texts) a locust plays a role in *Betha Grighora*, but it is not directly connected with the locusts from EÍ.

Furthermore, there are locusts in SnR. In Recension I of the prose version they are a divine punishment (1), mentioned as the Eighth (H.2.12, p. 2; YBL 65[b]; LB 118[a] margin; BB 240[a]) and the Seventh Plague (YBL 289[b]). They are described as 'numerous fiery locusts' ("*lucusti lan-imda loisct[h]echa*" — H.2.12; "*locusdai* [?] *lan-imda loiscthecha*" — YBL 65[b]; "*lugusti lan-imdha loisctheacha*" — YBL 289[b]; "*lugusti lan-imdai loiscthecha*" — LB margin; "*luguisde lanimda loscthecda*" — BB). On the other hand, in EÍ (fiery eyes) and in the gloss on the *Psalms* (fiery wings) the fiery aspect is ascribed to the *bruch* and the *bruchus*; therefore, this tradition represented by SnR deviates from these two texts. Perhaps the fiery aspect of these locusts should be connected with the locusts from the *Apocalypse of John* that emerge from the smoky Pit (see above). The locusts' target in Rec. I of the prose SnR is given in a general way: they come to 'them', meaning the Egyptians.

Locusts also occur in Recension II. They are the Sixth Plague in the enumeration[552]: "*plág na lucaiste n-erchótech*" (Dillon, 1958, p. 24), 'the plague of harmful locusts'(*ibid.*, p. 25[553]).

The similarities between the locusts from the different versions of *Saltair na Rann* and EÍ are their function as a divine punishment (1) and their eastern origin (2).

A final aspect has to be dealt with: EÍ gives a somewhat peculiar description of the destructive action of the locusts' wings: *tennait tra a n-etti im cech ní frisa comraicet*, 'they press their wings around everything they encounter'. One could compare this with: "*tennait a n-ette fria curpu*, '[they] press their wings against their bodies'" (Colwell, 1952, pp. 296-7). This sentence is part of FA §33. The action is, however, performed not by locusts but by white birds. Again, there is a connection between locusts and birds. The deed is equally destructive as its consequence is that

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[552] The locusts are preceded by a remark about a plague which destroys the corn (*na n-etha*) and followed by a plague upon the vineyards (*na fínemna*).

[553] In the poetic *Saltair na Rann* there are "*cuili, biasta, brecnata*" (Stokes, 1883, p. 57), 'flies, beasts, *scinifes*', among the plagues. DIL gives 'locusts' as the meaning of *brecnata* but also refers to a gloss which says: "*scinifes .i. brecnatin*" (see Stokes, Strachan, 1901-3/75, I, p. 1). Compare also "*scinifres .i. brecnatin*" (*ibid.*, p. 2). It seems more reasonable that *scinifes* are meant by *brecnata*. Perhaps the locusts are referred to by *bíasta*. (Cp. the poisonous beasts mentioned together with the *brucha* in Rec. I of the prose SnR; see above, 3.3.2.1.)

"streams of blood come out of them" (*ibid.*, p. 297). The context is one of eschatological punishment. The birds are transformed souls of the just who, while sitting in the Tree of Paradise, listen to Elijah reading from 'the book for the instruction of the souls'. After the rewards, the punishments are described: the horrors of Hell and the evils of the Day of Judgment. The soul-birds become joyful because of the rewards, but the punishments make them utter a cry of lament together with the self-destructive wing action. This motif occurs in other texts as well, but there the act with the wings is described by other verbs and not by the verb *tendaid*[554].

This survey of texts dealing with locusts shows clearly that there are numerous examples that describe these beasts as a divine punishment. Many of the instances described above represent the Ten Plagues of Egypt: various texts from the Vulgate, non-canonical scripture, glosses on the *Psalms*, Old English sermons and SnR. This could be seen as an explanation for their location in the East. Furthermore, in the Vulgate, foreign nations coming from the East are compared with locusts but the same can also be said of nations from the North. I could not find a source for the iron wings. In *Cosmographia* locusts with iron claws are described, which is similar but not the same. The iron could perhaps belong to apocalyptic imagery as found in canonical and non-canonical texts, where monsters sometimes have iron body parts or with eschatological texts where iron is used as an instrument of torture in Hell. Irish eschatological texts describe birds that press their wings against themselves and thereby wound themselves. This might perhaps be compared with the destructive wings of the locusts, which are sometimes also classified as birds. The remarkable fact was noted above that the gloss on Ps 104:34 classifies the locust as a small bird but at the same time describes it as wingless. In the Vulgate, Latin

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[554] The motif can be found firstly in *Dá Brón Flatha Nime*, 'The Two Sorrows of the Kingdom of Heaven' (edition and translation: Dottin, 1900; dated to the 11th century by Kenney, 1929/79, p. 738): "*túargit an ette ri-a-tóebaib*" (Dottin, 1900, p. 384), '[les oiseaux] battent des ailes contre leurs flancs' (*ibid.*, p. 385). Secondly, it is present in the poetic and the prose *Immram Snedgusa ocus Maic Ríagla*, 'The Voyage of Snedgus and Mac Ríagla'. The poetic version, edited and translated by Thurneysen (1904, pp. 9-14, 21-6) and dated to the 9th or 10th century by Kenney (1929/79, p. 448) reads in §27: "*In tan pritcais scela bratha buidnib litha, do tuairc[set] diu a neite friu comtis scitha*" (Thurneysen, 1904, p. 10), 'Als er die Kunde vom jüngsten Gericht mit Festesscharen predigte, schlugen sie lange die Flügel gegen sich, bis sie müde waren' (*ibid.*, p. 22). The oldest prose version, edited and translated by Stokes (1888) and dated to the 11th, but more probably the 12th century by Kenney (1929/79, p. 448), reads: "*ba handsidhe notuairctis an enlaith uile cona n-eitib a tæbo*" (Stokes, 1888, p. 20), 'then all the birds used to beat their sides with their wings' (*ibid.*, p. 21). Finally, it can be found in a Modern Irish version of TB (Dottin, 1907, pp. 300-1), but this text is beyond this study's scope (because it is a 19th-century version; Kenney, 1929/79, p. 737).

Sunday Letters and Old English sermons the vegetation is given as the locusts' target; in some places in the Vulgate, in the gloss on Ps 104:34 and in one Old English sermon the wheat is specifically mentioned.

Three aspects of the locusts from EÍ can therefore be traced to biblical and later connected traditions; one aspect — the iron wings — remains without a source. Perhaps it can be concluded that the iron wings are an Irish characteristic that has its roots in apocalyptic symbolism.

3.3.2.3 The fiery horse

The episode about the fiery horse is not the only one in EÍ in which horses are mentioned. The Irish Letter gives Sunday rules pertaining to horses in several places. The first mention of them is in the section that is central here: EÍ §9, where one is forbidden to ride on horse-back on Sunday, or else this horse will be transformed into a fiery one as punishment for its rider in Hell. In the same section oxen, bond-men and -women are also freed from Sunday labour and, finally, even the devils have a day off: no punishments are meted out in Hell on that day. Secondly, horses are mentioned three times in §17: neither horse-driving (*"slaide n-eich"*) nor riding on horse or ass (*"imrim for ech nó assan"*[555]) nor horse-riding (*"marcachus"*; O'Keeffe, 1905, pp. 200-3) are allowed on Sunday. These two sections belong to the Letter part of EÍ; rules about horses are further-more twice mentioned in the law part: anyone who rides a horse (*"Nech imrét ech"*) on Sunday shall forfeit horse and clothes (§23; *ibid.*, pp. 204-5) and another fine for horse-driving (*"slaide eich"*) is given in §25 (*ibid.*, pp. 206-7[556]).

These Sunday-rules are to be traced to the Ten Commandments, in which rules concerning the Sabbath day pertain not only to people but also to animals. However, the Ten Commandments[557] mention the ox but not the horse. This can be understood from the historical and literary context: in Israel, horses were used in war by foreign nations, which is why the horse is a symbol of war power[558]. Animals that were used on the fields by the Israelites were beasts of burden, like oxen and asses. Therefore, these animals are referred to in a context of rules about not working. The Irish version of the Sunday Letter deviates from this: horse-riding or horse-

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[555] One of the miracles enumerated in the *Dignatio diei dominici* (EÍ §15), however, is Jesus riding on an ass on Palm Sunday (*"a imrim forsin assain"*; O'Keeffe, 1905, p. 198).

[556] *Cáin Domnaig* does not mention horse-riding explicitly, but gives the following rules for Sunday: without riding (*"cen imrim"*; Hull, 1966, pp. 160-1, § 1); without a load on ox or horse or person (*"cen eire for dam na ech na duine"*; *ibid.*), and, as punishment, forfeiture of (...) horse and chattel (*"ech 7 sét"*; *ibid.*, pp. 162-3, § 2).

[557] Ex 20:10 — *iumentum*, 'beast of burden'; Ex 23:12 — *bos et asinus*, 'ox and ass'; Dt 5:14 — ox, ass and beast of burden.

[558] For more about the horse in this context, see J.A. Thompson in Buttrick and others (1962-75, II, *s.v.*).

driving are forbidden on Sunday. One might conclude that this difference is an adaptation to the Irish situation.

However, this study does not deal with ordinary horses, but with extraordinary or supernatural ones. The horse in Eĺ has four aspects and some of these are also found in the **Vulgate**. Supernatural horses serving as a divine punishment, which is the first aspect, can be found in II Mcc 3:25, where a horse with a terrible rider wounds a foreigner who demands tribute from the temple in Jerusalem. The well-known four apocalyptic horses appear with their riders in Apc 6:1-8 after the opening of the seals and they will strike the world with divine plagues. In Apc 9:17-19, horses with heads like lions' heads and tails similar to serpents with heads that cause harm are described. They and their riders will punish humanity. Finally, the 'Word of God' (mentioned in 3.3.2.1) on his white horse and his armies will conquer the beast and the kings of the earth at the End of Time (Apc 19:11-21).

The second aspect — the horse as a fiery being — can also be found in the Vulgate. Fiery horses (*equi ignei*) carry Elijah in a fiery chariot to Heaven (IV Rg 2:11) and Elisha is protected by fiery horses and chariots (IV Rg 6:17). However, they differ from the Irish fiery horse. These horses belong to Heaven and serve as a divine favour, whereas the Irish horse belongs to Hell and serves as a divine punishment[559]. The horses and their riders who are described as coming from Heaven in II Mcc 10:29 are a divine favour too. Here, the aspect of divine punishment seems to be present as well, for the supernatural beings strike the enemy with darts and fireballs. The fiery aspect is, therefore, not directly connected with the horses. The punishing horses from Apc 9:17-19 breathe fire, smoke and sulphur. But again, this is different from the Irish horse: its skin is fiery, because riding on it hurts.

To the third aspect — the horse as punishment in Hell — there is no biblical parallel.

The fourth aspect — the idea that the punishment corresponds with the sin, which is basic to this episode — does stem from the Bible[560]. In one of the *Psalms* we read:

"(...) quia tu reddes unicuique iuxta opera sua[561]" (PsG 61:13).	because you will render to everybody according to their work

More explicit is the *Book of Wisdom*:

"ut scirent quia	so that they might know that

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[559] Other supernatural horses that are not a divine punishment can be found in Za 1:8; 6:2-7; II Mcc 5:2-3. They did not exert any influence on Eĺ.

[560] There are also examples of this idea in Greek Hades descriptions.

[561] PsH 61:13 reads: *secundum opus suum*, instead of *iuxta opera sua*. This verse is quoted in Mt 16:27 and Rm 2:6; compare also I Cor 3:8; Apc 2:23.

per quae peccat	by what things one sins
quis per haec et torquetur"	that by the same one will be
(Sap 11:17)	tormented.

Sap 11 deals with the Ten Plagues and the exodus. In this chapter Israel and Egypt are presented as each other's opposites: God's blessing is for Israel; God's curse for Egypt. The preceding verse (11:16) relates how the Egyptians worshipped dumb serpents and useless beasts and how God sent a multitude of dumb animals in revenge as punishment. Therefore, the verse quoted here is about a punishment not in Hell or the afterlife but in Egypt in the past. Incidentally, the beasts enumerated in the subsequent verses deviate from the Ten Plagues-beasts: bears, fierce lions (11:18) and the above-mentioned and quoted strange fiery beasts (11:19-20). This biblical idea of retribution is central to the fiery horse episode in EÍ, but the form it takes in non-canonical texts is even more important, as will be shown below.

There are thus a few clues in the Vulgate: the horse can serve as a divine punishment (1) and it is mainly the horses from the ninth chapter of the *Apocalypse of John* that are interesting because they are fiery (2). However, they are not living and punishing in Hell (3) and the way in which they are fiery differs from EÍ's horse. The idea basic to EÍ's horse — the sin fitting the punishment (4) — has biblical roots. But again, Hell is not specifically mentioned and the text that refers most explicitly to punishment describes what happened in Egypt in the past. Relevant hellish descriptions one can find in non-canonical scripture, which will be dealt with now.

The fourth aspect — the idea of sin-and-punishment correspondence — is elaborated upon in the **non-canonical** ApcPe and ApcPa (I already referred to this in 3.3.2.1[562]). According to the Ethiopic text of ApcPe §6, Hell will be opened on the Day of Judgment and the people will have to go into the river of fire "while the works of every one of them shall stand before them (*something is wanting*) to every man according to his deeds[563]" (James, 1924/89, p. 514). Hellish punishments that are in accordance with this principle are then described: for instance, those who blasphemed the way of righteousness will be hung by their tongues while the fire burns forever (Gr. §22; Eth. §7); women who adorned themselves to commit adultery (Greek)/plaited their hair for fornication[564] (Ethiopic) are hung by their hair above a great lake full of flaming mire; their accomplices are hung by their feet (Gr. §§23-4)/loins (Eth. §7) and murderers are tormented by poisonous beasts and worms (Gr. §25; Eth. §7). Several beasts

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[562] A heavenly man in a fiery chariot drawn by horses like lightning occurs in Asen 17:8. These horses are heavenly and a divine favour, just as Elijah's and Elisha's horses, and therefore opposite to EÍ's horse.

[563] This could well be a quotation from the above-mentioned Ps 61:13.

[564] Müller (in Schneemelcher, 1904/89, p. 570) translates *Hurerei*, 'prostitution'.

that can be found in Hell are described (see also 3.3.2.4 and 3.3.2.5), but no fiery horses.

The climax in the *Apocalypse of Paul* is when the Son of God comes from Heaven and grants the sinners respite from hellish torture on Sunday (ApcPa §44; see above, 3.3.2.1). As mentioned above, this episode may have been the basis for the final part of §9 in EÍ, where it is also said that sinners will not be punished in Hell on Sunday. Before I discuss parallels to the fiery horse from the beginning of EÍ §9, I will advert to a few other connections between ApcPa and the Sunday Letter.

Various similarities can be found in two manuscripts of Redaction III[565] of ApcPa. Red. IIIb is found in Codex 12005, München, 15th century. This text concludes, like the other versions of Red. III, with a blessing for those who honour Sunday and an "Amen" (Silverstein, 1935, p. 192; *id.*, 1959, p. 234). But then it has a small appendix, beginning with "*Quia nescitis eum timere nec custodire (...)*" (*ibid.*, p. 194). Silverstein (*ibid.*, p. 44) characterises this as "a warning, unique with this manuscript, to those on earth who do not keep Sunday properly". In my opinion, this is obviously a quotation from a Latin Sunday Letter, which I believe to be L2. The first part of the first line of L2 ("*Incipit epistola de Cristo filio dei et de sancto die dominico*"; Priebsch, 1901, p. 400) has been omitted, after which L2 continues in a manner similar to Red. IIIb: "*quem nescitis tenere nec custodire (...)*" (*ibid.*). The two texts are highly similar: only some minor details are different. It should be noted that the Sunday Letter in the English manuscript — L2 — is preceded by a version of ApcPa (Priebsch, 1901, p. 398, n. 2), which is the same order as can be found in Codex 12005. The Latin Letter in Red. IIIb is not complete; the manuscript only contains a small part of L2.

The second relevant text is found in Codex 1629, Vienna, 14th century (Silverstein, 1935, pp. 44, 161, 220), one of two manuscripts that represent Red. IIId. It also has an appendix with a quotation from a Sunday Letter with a *Dignatio diei Dominici* text, followed by an admonition to fast on Friday and concluded by a built-in title, that this was the *Vision of Paul* (*ibid.*, p. 195). Because no monsters are mentioned in this quotation of the Sunday Letter, it is not as easy as in the case of Red. IIIb for me to trace it.

The opening sentence of Red. IV reads: "*Dies dominicus dies est electus, in quo gaudent angeli et archangeli maior diebus ceteris*" (Brandes, 1885, p. 75), 'Sunday is the excellent day, in which the angels and archangels take delight, more than in the other days'. At the end of the text (*ibid.*, p. 79) it is said that those who observe Sunday will have a part with the angels of God. Red. VIII (Silverstein, 1935, p. 209) and Red. X (*id.*, 1959, p. 244) start with similar opening sentences. The first sentence of the final section of Red. X (§21) is the blessing for those who observe Sunday (*ibid.*, p. 247).

Rudolph Willard (1935, pp. 971-2) is of the opinion that ApcPa and

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[565] See Silverstein (1935, p. 43).

the Sunday Letter influenced each other: ApcPa gave the Sunday Letter the motif of the Sunday respite and the Letter defined and extended the limits of the period of Sunday/the respite.

Finally, it is interesting to note that one of the Early Modern Irish versions of ApcPa (in 24 P 25) is headed by "[D]*on domnach andso*" (Caerwyn Williams, 1948-52, p. 129), 'On the Sunday', which is the same as the beginning of EÍ in YBL: *Don domnach andso* (O'Keeffe, 1905, p. 192, § 1, n. 1).

In addition to these connections between ApcPa and the Sunday Letter, there is also a more specific similarity between one of ApcPa's Redactions and EÍ. This is given by Red. VI in Codex 682, Stiftsbibliothek St. Gallen, 9th century or perhaps *c.* 850 (Silverstein, 1935, p. 214; edition: *ibid.*, pp. 215-8[566]), which is completely independent from the other ones and seems to be related to the Long Latin texts (*ibid.*, p. 58). Its conclusion deviates from all versions: instead of the usual Sunday respite from hellish torments, Paul has his friends and relatives freed from Hell (*ibid.*, pp. 59, 217-8).

Red. VI of ApcPa describes the revelation in the third person instead of the first. The relevant section is found in §9:

"Venit in alio loco.	He came in another place.
uidit homines in caballum ereas et	He saw people on a copper nag and
iumenta aerea et alia	copper beasts of burden and other
quadropedia furauerunt	four-footed animals [which] they had stolen
et super ipsas ardebant.	and they were burning on them
siq̄ flamma ignis;	as a flame of fire.
Et interrogauit sanctus paulus;	And St Paul asked:
Istae qui commiserunt domine;	Who are those who have done wrong, lord?
Respondit ei angelus.	The angel answered him:
Istae sunt quia	Those are [there] because they
cauallo et iumenta	et carried off a nag, beasts of burden
alia quadropedia inuiolauerunt	and other four-footed animals[567]
et numquam paenituerunt	and they never repented.
propter hoc habent propria paena;"	Because of this they have a proper
(Silverstein, 1935, p. 217[568])	punishment.

[566] The first two sections of this version can also be found in Codex Palatinus 216, Vatican, 9th-10th century (Silverstein, 1935, pp. 214, 221).

[567] Silverstein (1935, p. 86) renders these beasts as "mares and stallions and other quadrupeds".

[568] According to Silverstein (1935, p. 86), this class of sinners only occurs in two other visions: the *Vision of a Cistercian Novice*, reported by Vincent of Beauvais and ICUC. The first vision is outside of this study's scope because of its date; for the second one, see below. Furthermore, Silverstein describes the language of this section from ApcPa Red. VI as being "reminiscent of such statements about horse and animal stealing as are found in the Salic and Visigothic Laws, which testify

Comparing this section with EÍ §9 gives the following result: in both texts a fiery horse[569] (in singular form) is mentioned as a divine punishment. They differ in that ApcPa Red. VI describes a punishment for stealing and EÍ for riding on Sunday. The second aspect is also present in a different form: in ApcPa Red. VI the people punished are burning on the beast and seem to be aflame themselves. Moreover, the nag in Red. VI is made from copper, whereas the horse in EÍ is 'simply' fiery. The third aspect is the same: both nag and horse are found in Hell. The fourth aspect is similar as well: that with which one sins is the instrument with which one is punished. It seems as if the last sentence of §9 in ApcPa Red. VI stresses this idea.

It is difficult to determine the relation between EÍ and Red. VI. Both texts could be dated to the 9th century and it is impossible to point out a direct dependence. I have already referred to Willard's view of the mutual influence of ApcPa and the Sunday Letter; Silverstein (1935, pp. 82-90) furthermore connects a few motifs from Red. VI with ApcPe and Irish visions: the *Vision of Laisrén*[570] (edition and translation: Meyer, 1899, pp. 114-9; dated to the early 10th or the latter half of the 9th century; *ibid.*, p. 113), FA, ICUC and the Irish versions of TM. He arrives at the conclusion that the Irish visions and Red. VI probably depend upon a non-extant third work, which seems to have taken over material from ApcPe as well (Silverstein, 1935, p. 90). It should be noted that Dumville is of the opinion that Red. VI is an Irish text:

"One must conclude that Redaction VI of *Visio Pauli* was composed, if not in Ireland, at any rate in an Irish continental centre retaining the closest links with the home culture. The laconic style of this redaction is in places extraordinarily reminiscent of the style of Old Irish tales. But the feature of Redaction VI which will most forcibly strike as familiar any reader of Irish saints' Lives and religious anecdotes is the altered account of Paul's intercession for the souls of the damned (...). He intercedes for his *parentes*, and is allowed to remove from hell all his relatives to the ninth degree of

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by their discussion to the prevalence of the evil" (*ibid.*). Incidentally, he also mentions the motif of riding on horses with saddles of fiery spikes (*ibid.*, p. 126, n. 22).

[569] ApcPa Red. VI mentions a *caballus*, 'an inferior riding- or pack-horse, a nag'. This meaning is given by Lewis and Short (1879/1991), but it should be noted that in the later part of the Middle Ages the word became a general term for 'horse' (see Latham, 1965/73, *s.v.*; Walde, Hofmann, 1938-56, *s.v.*).

[570] This vision describes fiery demons with fiery weapons (§3). Their fiery hair is compared with the hair of a thistle (*omthand*). One could compare this with the image of the devil in PB/PP and of Cú Chulainn in TBC (see 3.3.2.1). Another interesting aspect in this text is that Hell itself is described as a sea of fire, with heads seen (by Laisrén) above the waves (§8). This bears similarity to the fiery sea in ICUC §66 where human heads are dashing against each other and to the oppressive infernal sea with multitudes of heads in SnR Canto V (see 3.3.2.5).

relationship!" (Dumville, 1977-78, p. 70).

There is thus a variant version of the fiery horse in a non-canonical text which may be of Irish origin. It could well be that the unknown source — Silverstein's non-extant third work — described a fiery horse, but whether this beast was a punishment for stealing or for riding on Sunday cannot be decided as we no longer have this text. The line of development could have been as follows: this non-extant source described a Sunday sin — riding on horseback on Sunday — which was replaced by the sin of stealing by the author of Red. VI, as this author was not dealing with the motif of Sunday veneration and observance. There is also another possibility, which I will suggest in the conclusion of this section after having dealt with the other kinds of text.

The idea of punishment corresponding with the sin committed is also found in GrApcEz. In 3.3.2.1 fiery axles were mentioned: they revolve upon the ears of old men, who are eavesdroppers (GkApcEz 4:16-18). This apocalypse also gives the motif of respite. Ezra weeps bitterly when he sees the punishments, but the tormented say to him: "Since you came here, holy one of God, we have obtained a slight respite" (GkApcEz 5:8-10). There is, incidentally, no respite in the Latin version. God says when Ezra asks for mercy on the sinners: "Ezra, let them receive according to their works" (VisEz 61).

There are thus some similar motifs in non-canonical apocalypses. The above-described apocalypses show people who have to undergo a divine punishment (1) because of the sins they committed during life. The punishment descriptions are full of places and instruments of fire (2) in or with which the unhappy souls are tortured. The torments all take place in Hell (3). In ApcPe and ApcPa there are numerous instances in which the punishment is related to the sin; this motif is less clear and less numerous in the visions ascribed to Ezra (4). A special relationship exists between ApcPa and the Sunday Letter as they both give an important role to Sunday in the motif of the Sunday respite. However, Red. VI does not honour Sunday; it is in this text that the only fiery horse is found. The manuscript in which Red. VI is found is contemporaneous with the date ascribed to EÍ. Red. VI has a few elements in common with Irish visions, but one cannot conclude whether this redaction of ApcPa was a source of EÍ. It may not be older than the Irish Sunday Letter and the differences between the punishment descriptions in the two texts also make it difficult to posit one as the source of the other. Therefore, the conclusion must be drawn that the fiery horse in ApcPa Red. VI is a variant version of the one in EÍ.

Horses are, of course, described in **Isidore**'s *Etymologiae* but none of them can be adduced as a parallel image or source of the supernatural horse in EÍ.

Horses are mentioned in two versions of the **Latin Letter** (Tou and M2). In these two texts they are part of a threat uttered by Jesus: if the people do not observe Sunday (and the other saints' days), Christ will send his

wrath, (ferocious, M2) beasts, wolves (and many other beasts, M2) that will devour 'your' children and he will make the people perish (*"interire"*, M2: Priebsch, 1895, p. 47; *"moriamini"*, Tou: Rivière, 1906, p. 603) under the feet of Saracen horses (and by the sword of the barbarians, Tou) because of his holy resurrection (which they daily violate, Tou).

The only aspect that these horses share with the one in EÍ is being a divine punishment for the non-observance of Sunday (1). They are neither fiery (2), nor do they appear in Hell (3), and their function as punishment consists of trampling on people instead of being their mount. There is no trace of similarity between punishment and sin (4), for the invasion of foreign enemies is one of the general characteristics of divine punishments. Therefore, I conclude that they differ too much from the horse in EÍ and cannot be seen as either source or variant version.

There are no relevant texts about fiery horses in **Hiberno-Latin**[571].

Priebsch (1906-7, p. 141) adduces a section from the **Old English homily** B (Napier, 1883, p. 223, ll. 6-8) as a parallel to the section about the horse and the ox in EÍ. The Old English sermon says that all four-footed beasts cry out to Christ (lit. 'me'), who hears them, but the people will not give them any rest on Sunday[572]. Priebsch (1906-7, p. 145) observes that the general remark in the Old English sermon and the specified one in EÍ is to be considered as a real difference between the two texts.

Both the Old English four-footed animals and the Irish ox could be traced to biblical Sabbath commandments about beasts of burden, oxen and asses (see above). The horse in EÍ stands on its own. It is interesting to note that the word for the animals in Hom. B (*fyperfete nytenu*, 'four-footed beasts') is in accordance with the term for the beasts in ApcPa Red. VI (*quadrupedia*), which are mentioned together with the nag. However, the *quadrupedia* are stolen animals and not creatures forced to work on Sabbaths or Sundays.

Although there is a connection between the tears of the ox and slaves in EÍ on the one hand and the cry of the fourfooted animals in Hom. B. on the other, there is no parallel of the Irish fiery horse in the Old English homilies.

Finally, the **Middle Irish** *Immram curaig Ua Corra* is of importance. In 2.3.2.5 I described the climax of the adventure of the Uí Chorra in the fiery sea: the attack by monsters that try to pierce their boat. This text is again interesting, but this time in relation to the Sunday Letter because the two texts have certain things in common. First, a Sunday miracle is described (§50): a noisy river in the shape of a rainbow that rises up into

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[571] I consulted the CD-Rom of the Database of Medieval Latin from Celtic Sources in March 1995.
[572] Whitelock (1982, p. 57, n. 69) translates: "(...) I hear them and will [emending *nillað* to *wile*] give them rest on the holy Sunday".

the air and descends into the sea. It does not appear on Sunday "*ó thráth nóna dia sathairn co tráth teirte dia luain*[573]" (Van Hamel, 1941, p. 103), 'from the time of nones of Saturday till the time of tierce of Monday[574]'.

Second, after a foretaste of Hell, where souls are tortured with fire and iron (§53), the Uí Chorra see a flock of birds (§55). One of them — the soul of an Irish woman — alights on the boat (§55-6). The voyagers ask her if they are going to Hell. This is not the case, the bird says, who furthermore explains that the birds are souls who leave Hell on Sunday (§56). Therefore, in ICUC the motif of the Sunday respite is present as well.

A few episodes later they arrive in a sea where they see people who are punished in accordance with the sin that they have committed. The first person they see is someone who used to dig[575] on Sunday and who now digs with a fiery spade. He is continually submerged by a fiery wave (§61). After a meeting with the Miller of Hell (§62) they see a man punished (§63) in the way predicted by EÍ §9[576]:

"Tarfás dóib iar sin marcach adbulmór forsin fairge.	Hereafter a great, large horseman was shown to them on the open sea.
Ticced in tonn tairis cach la fecht	The wave used to come over him one time
7 no bíd oc éigim in fecht aile.	and he used to be crying out the other time.
'Cid rét dobeir amlaid sin tú, a duine?' ol iatsom. 'Asbér frib,' ol sé.	"What thing is it that brings you in that condition, o man?" they said. "I will tell you," he said.
Ro gatas ech bráthar dam,' ol sé,	"I stole the horse of a brother of mine," he said,
'7 dorónus marcachas domnaig fair, 7 atúsa ocum phianad ann sin din gním sin 7 ech tened im gabul.	"and I rode on it on Sunday and I am being punished therein for that act with a fiery horse between my thighs.
7 is í sin pian cach duine	And that is the punishment of every person who
dogní marcachas domnaig'" (Van Hamel, 1941, p. 107).	rides on a horse on Sunday"

Then they see dishonest braziers and smiths who are punished by black

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[573] In EÍ the period of Sunday is "*ó tráth espurta die sathairn co teirt in lúain*" (O'Keeffe, 1905, p. 194, §6), 'from the time of vespers of Saturday till the terce of Monday'.
[574] Stokes (1893, p. 45) translates 'Tuesday'.
[575] Stokes (1893, p. 51) translates 'row'. See DIL, *s.v. rúamar*.
[576] Translation based upon that of Stokes (1893).

birds with fiery beaks and red, fiery talons[577]. Their tongues are burning
in their heads (§64). Finally, a huge man shows up, with fiery flakes
coming from his throat, an enormous load of firewood on his back and an
iron club in his hand. The load now and then catches flame. Moreover, he
is submerged by fiery waves. This man is punished because he used to
carry firewood on his back on Sunday[578] (§65). Hereafter, the voyagers
are in danger themselves (§66), as described in 2.3.2.5.

ICUC gives, therefore, another example of the fiery horse. The terms
that are used in this text are similar to those in EÍ, see figure 5:

Figure 5

EÍ	ICUC
Nach ech riadar isin domnach is ech tened bís hi n-gabul a marcaig a n-iffirn.	dorónus marcachas domnaig fair (...) ech tened im gabul. 7 is í sin pian cach duine dogní marcachas domnaig.

ICUC gives a combination of the parallel episode in ApcPa Red. VI —
punishment for the stealing of a horse — and the one in EÍ — punishment
for riding on a horse on Sunday.

Silverstein (1935, p. 80) takes the opinion that EÍ influenced ICUC.
He furthermore points out that ICUC stresses the transgression of Sunday
observance: this is mentioned explicitly as the cause of the punishment
(*ibid.*, p. 86). Therefore, the transgression of the Sunday rule is more
important to the author than the theft of the horse. Silverstein also suggests
that the fact that the theft is mentioned seems to argue for an older version
of ICUC similar to Red. VI that underwent a 'Sabbatarian adaptation'.

The possibility suggested above referred to the role of a lost text —
perhaps a version of a redaction of ApcPa or perhaps Silverstein's third
non-extant text — which described a punishment for riding on a horse on
Sunday. Red. VI borrowed this and replaced the sin of riding on Sunday
by stealing as its author omitted references to (the veneration of) Sunday.
The same — now lost — text was used by EÍ's author. This theory implies

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[577] In the Ethiopic ApcPe §11 a punishment in Hell is meted out by flesh-devou-
ring birds (see also 3.3.2.5).
[578] Stokes (1893, p. 55, n. 1) refers to Nm 15:32-36, where a man gathers sticks
on Sabbath. God commands via Moses that this man be stoned to death. I would
like to refer to an Irish parallel: the first example of the three supernatural
punishments (see 3.1; Meyer, 1901, p. 228) is about a boy who collects firewood
on Sunday. In the presence of one of the Céli Dé the boy is supernaturally
punished: the wood on his back burns him to death. Stokes (1893, p. 55, n. 1)
furthermore refers to Jacob Grimm (1876, pp. 598-600) who gives interesting
parallels to the motif of stealing and/or carrying firewood on Sunday, but they are
beyond the scope of this study, being too late.

the following possibility for ICUC: its author combined EÍ and/or the non-extant text with Red. VI.

To conclude this section: horses serving as a divine punishment can be found in the Vulgate, especially in the *Apocalypse of John*, where they have a fiery aspect, albeit different from the horse in EÍ. Divine punishments meted out in Hell, where fire is usually used in the torment, are elaborately described in the non-canonical *Apocalypse of Peter* and *of Paul*. Some of the punishments described in these texts are according to the principle that the punishment is in accordance with the sin, just as in EÍ. The root of this thought can be found in the Vulgate, but it is more developed in ApcPe and ApcPa. ApcPa, moreover, shares with the Sunday Letter the interest in Sunday. Some Latin Sunday Letters mention horses but they are neither fiery, nor in Hell, nor connected directly with the committed sin. It is remarkable that there are no real parallels of the fiery horse in the Latin Sunday Letters and the Old English homilies. The fiery horse differs in this from the *brucha* and locusts analysed earlier, and also from the flying serpents and five monsters treated below. The idea that is basic to the fiery horse can thus be found in canonical and, even more so, in non-canonical texts, but there are no immediate sources for the beast. There are, however, two variant versions. First, the contemporary Red. VI of ApcPa gives a fiery copper nag on which people who stole a nag during life have to sit after death in Hell. Second, the Middle Irish ICUC shows a hellish environment in a fiery sea, where a man has to ride on a fiery horse because he rode on a stolen horse on Sunday during life. ICUC combines the motifs of riding on Sunday from EÍ and stealing horses from ApcPa Red. VI. The variant versions thus occur in texts that may have an Irish origin (Red. VI) or are Irish (ICUC).

As I announced above, I will now offer another possibility concerning the origin of the fiery horse. Instead of positing the role of lost texts, this theory deals with extant texts only. It should be noted that neither ApcPa nor the redactions of ApcPa describe Sunday sins. This raises the possibility that the authors of Red. VI and EÍ gave sins that happened in their environment without using a source, as the idea of replacement by the author of Red. VI has no basis in extant texts and EÍ has no source for this particular instance of a Sunday sin. The author of Red. VI may have been concerned with the theft of horses and other kinds of cattle, such as beasts of burden. The author of EÍ could have been concerned with horse-riding on Sunday (cp. also the other references to this in EÍ). In other words, the authors took a social evil from their own historical context and described this as a sin punished in Hell, independent of each other. The motif that they share is the principle of the correspondence between punishment and sin, which they took from sources: biblical and non-canonical texts. This line of reasoning leads to the conclusion that the fiery horse is the result of the creativity of the Irish author of EÍ. This does not make the beast into a monster of the native Irish kind. As the whole idea is clearly based upon the biblical and non-canonical motif of sin and punishment correspondence, the fiery horse should be categorised as a monster of the integrated kind.

3.3.2.4 The flying serpents

In the **Vulgate** several kinds of serpent are found, some of which were described in 2.3.2.4 where I dealt with the motif of 'the power over snakes'. Here, biblical serpents will be presented that share characteristics with the snakes in EÍ.

The latter's first aspect is their function as a divine punishment for the transgression of Sunday observance. Serpents serve as a divine sanction in the Vulgate both in a specific and general way. The best-known biblical story about serpents as a specific divine punishment is given in Nm 21:6-9. I already referred to this story in the preceding chapter (2.3.2.4). Other texts refer to the story mentioning the serpents, but omitting the adjective 'fiery' (*serpens* in Idt 8:25; *coluber* in Sap 16:5; *draco* in Sap 16:10; and *serpens* in I Cor 10:9[579]). The verses from the *Book of Wisdom* are part of a series of chapters (Sap 10-19) in which the story of the Israelites is told (the stay in Egypt; the exodus; the journey through the desert and their settlement in the promised land). Examples from this part of the work have been mentioned earlier (see 3.3.2.1-3): the strange beasts with fiery eyes (Sap 11:19), the locust plague (Sap 16:9) and the idea that the punishment concurs with the sin (Sap 11:17). Serpents are also present in this sequence of chapters: first, the Egyptians are punished by that which they worshipped (*serpentes*; Sap 11:16) and second, the hissing of snakes by which the Egyptian wizards are tormented (*serpentes*; Sap 17:9). As last examples of serpents as a specific punishment in the Vulgate there are the serpent in the sea (*serpens*; Am 9:3) that God can use as an instrument to punish and, finally, the tails of the apocalyptic horses are like harmful serpents (*serpentes*; Apc 9:19).

Furthermore, serpents are mentioned as a general divine punishment. In Dt 32:24 devouring birds, the teeth of beasts and serpents (*serpentes*) form part of a chain of general divine sanctions, which become effective when Israel does not obey God's commands. Some of these are in accordance with the punishments mentioned in the snake section of EÍ: fire (vs. 22) and the sword (25), symbolising foreign nations.

The same idea can be observed in Sir 39. A part of this chapter describes how everything comes from God: prosperity if one leads a good life; disasters if one behaves badly. God commands the waters (vs 29), spirits (33-34), fire, hail, famine and death (35), the teeth of beasts, scorpions and serpents (*serpentes*) and the avenging sword (36). These

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[579] One should not tempt Christ, St Paul says here. He adduces that some tempted once and perished by the serpents, by which he is referring to what happened to the Israelites in the desert. It is the Enemy or Satan who tempts Christ three times in the Bible. The second (in Mt 4:5-6) or the third time (in Lc 4:9-11) Satan leads Jesus to the roof of the temple, where he quotes Ps 90:11-12. It is interesting to note that verse 13 of this *Psalm* (described above, in 2.3.2.4) is an example of the God-given power over snakes (to be precise: to tread upon asp and basilisk or to trample on lion and dragon). Jesus answers that one should not tempt God, which again is a quotation (Dt 6:16).

phenomena stand by on earth and when God orders, they strike[580] (37). Important as parallels for EÍ §10 are: fire, hail, serpents and the sword.

Serpents (*coluber, regulus, absorbens volucrem*) are used to symbolise the enemy God sends (Is 14:29) and Ier 8 also describes general divine punishments. These include: women and fields that will fall into the hands of strangers (vs 10); vines that will be without grapes and a fig tree without figs (13); God will send basilisks (*serpentes reguli*) to whom incantations are of no avail and they will bite 'you' (17).

Sometimes *draco* refers to the serpent (for instance, in Sap 16:10). As described above (3.3.2.1), an instance of divine punishment is that towns are deserted and become a dwelling place for beasts, monsters and all kinds of weird creature. The hedgehog is one of them; another example is the *draco*. These 'wasteland' dragons cannot be found in the Hebrew Bible; they came into existence because of Jerome's (and in some cases the LXX's) translation of the word תן, 'jackal', as *draco* (for more about this, see Kiessling, 1970, p. 173). They are present in Iob 30:29; PsH 43:20; Is 13:21; 34:13; 35:7; 43:20; Ier 9:11; 10:22; 14:6; 49:33; 50:39[581]; 51:37; Mal 1:3 and compare Mi 1:8.

Finally, Sir 10:13 describes the fate that awaits human beings after death: they will inherit serpents, beasts and worms (*serpentes, bestiae, vermes*). This originally meant the eating of corpses by animals in the grave or in the field if not buried, as Jesus Sirach probably did not believe in an after-life[582]. But I think that in the course of time this text attained additional significance: in the realm of the dead and later in Hell these animals reappear, but as punishment[583]. I shall return to this in 3.3.2.5.

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[580] This idea of the creation obeying the Creator can also be found in Ps 148, but without a specific punishment context: "*laudate Dominum de terra dracones et omnes abyssi ignis grando nix glacies spiritus procellarum quae faciunt verbum eius montes et omnes colles ligna fructifera et omnes cedri bestiae et universa pecora serpentes et volucres pinnatae* (PsH reads: *bestiae et omnia iumenta reptilia et aves volantes*)" (PsG 148:7-10), 'Praise the Lord from the earth dragons and all abysses, fire, hail, snow, ice, blowing (of) storms which execute his word, mountains and all hills, fruit-trees and all cedars, wild and all kinds of tame beast, serpents and winged birds'. Again, some phenomena from EÍ §10 that execute God's orders occur: fire, hail, wind and serpents.

[581] The Hebrew text does not read here תן, but צי, a dweller or being of the desert.

[582] See, for instance, Vriezen, Van der Woude (1948/80, pp. 322-3).

[583] In the earlier-mentioned Irish sermon on the Ten Commandments the idea of punishment emerges, whereby this quotation is somewhat changed: "*amal atbeir Solam i n-Eclaisiastach, 'co mbia triur óigred oc fir husarachta .i. bésti 7 nathracha 7 cruma': beit a máine oc na piastaib .i. ag cairdib na colla; biaid a animm oc nathrachaib neime .i. ac diablaib; 7 biaid ag crumaib a chorp; ni thibre nechtar dib-so a chuid fen ar in dá chuid ele*" (Atkinson, 1887, p. 253), 'As Solomon says, in Ecclesiasticus [X.13], "there are three heirs of a usurer: beasts and serpents and worms;" his treasures remain with the beasts, viz. the friends of the flesh; his soul is left with the poisonous serpents, the devils; his body comes to the worms; and not one of these will give up its own share for the

Obviously, the Vulgate gives enough examples of serpents as a divine punishment which may have been used as inspiration for the first aspect of EÍ's snakes.

The second characteristic of the serpents in EÍ is that they fly. There are not many biblical predecessors for that — in fact only two references can be adduced, both from the *Book of Isaiah*. In Is 14:29, already mentioned above, a punishment for Philistea is described: from a serpent (*coluber*) comes forth a basilisk (*regulus*), and its seed will be a bird-swallower (*absorbens volucrem*). The Hebrew text does not give bird-swallower but שָׂרָף מְעוֹפֵף, 'flying serpent[584]'. The Old Latin translation follows the Hebrew text more closely than the Vulgate does: "*siquidem de semine serpentis egredientur genimina aspidum et de geniminibus eorum egredientur serpentes pennati/volantes*", 'since from the seed of the serpent will come forth a brood of asps, and from their progeny will come forth winged/flying serpents[585]'.

The other place in which the Hebrew text gives a flying serpent (מְעוֹפֵף שָׂרָף) has remained unchanged in the Vulgate: Is 30:6 mentions lioness, lion, viper (*vipera*) and flying basilisk (*regulus volans*[586]). This flying serpent is one of the dangers of the desert[587] and, in Is 14:29, it is a symbol of judgment and destruction (Joines, 1974, pp. 7-8).

Therefore, the idea of a flying serpent does occur in the Vulgate but, even more interesting, is the choice of words in the *Vetus Latina*: *serpentes pennati*. In the discussion of the Latin versions of the Letter on this subject it will become evident why this is so important.

The third aspect — people as victims of the serpents — can be found in all instances of snakes as a divine punishment. This final observation makes it probable that the Vulgate was among the sources for this kind of monster.

Serpents serving as a divine punishment can also be found in **non-canonical scripture**. In the *Apocalypse of Elijah* (ApcEl; translation by O.S. Wintermute in Charlesworth, 1983, pp. 735-53; dated between the 1st and 4th centuries AD), a text in Coptic and Greek, a lament for Egypt is

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two other portions' (*ibid.*, p. 487). Jesus Sirach speaks of the general human destiny after death; this sermon transforms this into a special punishment for specific persons, whereby the serpents have become part of the afterlife.

[584] The serpent שָׂרָף, 'saraf', is the same kind that bit the Israelites in the desert (Nm 21).

[585] The Old Latin text differs in one aspect from the Hebrew original in that it refers to 'serpents' instead of 'a serpent'. The LXX reads: ὄφεις πετόμενοι, 'flying serpents'.

[586] The Old Latin version reads: *aspides et genimina aspidum volantium*, 'asps and progeny of flying asps'. The LXX reads: ἀσπίδες καὶ ἔκγονα ἀσπίδων πετομένων, 'asps and the young of flying asps'.

[587] In Dt 8:15 the serpent with the burning breath (*serpens flatu adurens*), the scorpion and the thirst-snake (*dipsas*) are mentioned as dangers of the desert. In the case of the first kind the Hebrew reads 'fiery serpents' (the 'saraf' again).

uttered. Their children will be taken away as plunder (ApcEl 2:30); people will desire death, but death will flee from them (ApcEl 2:32). The king will give a command: all nursing women will be collected and brought bound before the king. The women will suckle serpents and the blood drawn from their breasts will be used as poison for arrows (ApcEl 2:35). These serpents are a divine punishment (1), whereby the king is an intermediary and women (3) are their victims.

In the *Lives of the Prophets*, the prophet Ezekiel makes serpents devour the children and flocks of the 'tribes' of Dan and Gad in Babylon as punishment for the sacrilege they committed of persecuting people who obeyed God's law (LivPro 3:16-17). Here is thus another instance of serpents as a divine punishment (1) and now it is children (3) and animals that are their target.

In EÍ the flying serpents are not said to come from Hell. It is, however, necessary to advert to some of the hellish punishments in noncanonical apocalypses because there seem to be connections between these punishments and serpents from the Latin Sunday Letters and Old English homilies. I will not enumerate all the beasts from Hell given in these texts but select a few which seem to belong together in a certain way.

In the *Apocalypse of Peter* the following hellish punishments are relevant: those for murderers (Gr. §25; Eth. §7) and for people who have committed abortion or infanticide (Gr. §26; Eth. §8). The Greek Akhmim fragment §25 tells how murderers and their accomplices are cast in a place full of evil creeping beasts by which they are tormented. Moreover, worms are set upon them. The souls of the murdered are watching this and comment that God's judgement is righteous. There are thus two kinds of beast mentioned in this section. The first is designated in Greek by ἑρπετόν, 'beast or animal which goes on all fours; creeping thing, reptile, especially: snake', and θήρ, '(wild) beast'. The second kind is called σκώληκες, 'worms, grubs, larvae'. The Ethiopic text mentions venomous beasts and worms. Therefore, perhaps serpents as a divine punishment are mentioned in the case of the first kind.

There are three witnesses of §26: a quotation from ApcPe by Clemens of Alexandria († before 215), the Akhmim fragment and the Ethiopic §8. Clemens and the Ethiopic text mention two punishments, the Akhmim fragment only one; this last text does not mention beasts. The first punishment was already mentioned in 3.3.2.1. In his *Prophetical Extracts* (edition: Preuschen, 1905, pp. 87-8; translation: James, 1924/89, p. 506) Clemens first quotes 'the Scripture': an angel will take care of children who have been exposed by their parents (41.1), and goes on by quoting 'Peter in the Apocalypse': a flash of fire or a bolt of lightning will go forth from these children and smite the eyes of the women (41.2). The Akhmim fragment §26 describes this too, but more elaborately and somewhat differently. Women who conceived out of wedlock gave birth out of due time (abortion). They are in a horrible lake in Hell, covered up to their necks with their children opposite them: the children cry and flash forth rays of fire to the eyes of the women. The Ethiopic text has the same contents as the Akhmim text.

Both Clemens and the Ethiopic text name another punishment involving children. The sin is different: in the text of Clemens abortion is punished, in the Ethiopic text infanticide. Clemens (48.1) refers to Peter in the Apocalypse, who says that the children that underwent abortion are also delivered to an angel who will take care of them. Clemens furthermore mentions the punishment of their mothers:

"Τὸ δὲ γάλα τῶν γυναικῶν	"But the milk of the mothers,
ῥέον ἀπὸ τῶν μαστῶν	flowing from their breasts
καὶ πηγνύμενον,	and congealing,
φησὶν ὁ Πέτρος ἐν τῇ ἀποκαλύψει,	saith Peter in the Apocalypse,
γεννήσει θηρία λεπτὰ	shall engender small beasts (snakes)
σαρκοφάγα καὶ	devouring the flesh, and
ἀνατρέχοντα εἰς αὐτὰς κατεσθίει	these running upon them devour them:
διὰ τὰς ἁμαρτίας γίνεσθαι τὰς	teaching that the torments come to
κολάσεις διδάσκων"	pass because of the sins (correspond to the sins)"
(Preuschen, 1905, p. 88)	(James, 1924/89, p. 506).

I do not know why James adds 'snakes' between brackets; the small carnivorous beasts are designated θηρία. In this place the Ethiopic text mentions women and men who are punished. They stand naked and opposite them are their children (in a place of delight). The children sigh and cry to God; they accuse their parents of having killed them.

> "And the milk of their mothers flowing from their breasts shall congeal, and from it shall come beasts devouring flesh, which shall come forth and turn and torment them for ever with their husbands, because they forsook the commandments of God and slew their children" (James, 1924/89, p. 515).

This second punishment, which is not mentioned in the Akhmim fragment, is important in this context. Beasts, in the Greek text characterised as small, are a divine punishment (1) and they torment women who have had an abortion (Greek) or women and men who have killed their children (Ethiopic; 3). The beasts devour the flesh. It is not inconceivable that in the Greek text the following is meant: women who withheld their milk are punished by this milk, changing into beasts that perhaps devour their breasts because it is said *expressis verbis* that the torments correspond to the sins.

A woman who did not give her milk to her children but killed them instead is seen by Ezra while she is punished in a similar way (GrApcEz 5:2-3):

"Καὶ ἰδον γυναῖκα κρεμαμένην,	"And I saw a woman suspended
καὶ τέσσαρα θηρία θηλάζοντα	and four wild beasts were sucking
τοὺς μαστοὺς αὐτῆς.	upon her breasts.

Καὶ εἶπόν μοι οἱ ἄγγελοι·
Αὕτη τὸ γάλα ἐφθόνησεν τοῦ
δοῦναι, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὰ νήπια
ἐν τοῖς ποταμοῖς ἔρριψεν"
(Wahl, 1977, p. 30)

And the angels said to me,
"She begrudged giving her milk
but also cast infants
into the rivers"
(Stone in Charlesworth, 1983, p. 576).

The Latin *Vision of Ezra* (VisEz 51-54) reads:

"Et vidit in loco obscurissimo
alium fornacem ardentem, in quem
mittebantur multae mulieres.
Et dixit: Quae sunt istae?
Angeli dixerunt:
Istae sunt, quae filios in adulterio
habuerunt et necaverunt eos.
Et ipsi parvuli
accusabant eas dicentes:
Domine, animas, quas dedisti
nobis, istae abstulerunt.
Et vidit alias mulieres
in igne pendentes,
et serpentes mamillas earum
suggentes[588].
Et dixit: Quae sunt istae?
Et angeli dixerunt: Istae sunt,
quae filios suos necaverunt et
aliis orphanis mamillas non
dederunt"
(Wahl, 1977, pp. 57-8)

"And he saw in a most obscure place
another furnace burning, into which
many women were cast.
And he said, "Who are they?"
And the angels said,
"They had sons in adultery
and killed them."
And those little ones themselves
accused them, saying,
"Lord, the souls which you gave
to us these (women) took away."
And he saw other women
hanging in the fire
and serpents were sucking their
breasts.
And he said, "Who are they?"
And the angels said,
"They killed their sons and
they did not give suck to other
orphans"
(Mueller and Robbins in Charlesworth, 1983, pp. 589-90[589]).

This seems to be a variant version of ApcPe §26: first, the punishment of the women with the children present, accusing them (in ApcPe flashing forth bolts of lightning); second, a variant version of the punishment in which the begrudged milk turns into beasts, which are designated by the

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[588] This sentence is not given in manuscript V.

[589] The text is from manuscript V and H; the translation is based upon ms V. The third ms edited by Wahl is L, which reads here: "*Et vidi in obscurissimo loco et alium fornacem, ubi mittebantur multi. Interrogavit beatus Esdras angelos: Qui sunt isti? Et dixerunt: Istae sunt, quae filios de adulterio habuerunt et necaverunt eos. Et parvuli ipsi interpellant dicentes: Domine, animam, quam tu dedisti nobis, istae abstulerunt. Et vidi alias mulieres per ignes pendentes, et serpentes mamillas earum suggentes. Et dixi ad angelos: Quae sunt istae? Et dixerunt mihi: Istae sunt, quae suos parvulos necaverunt et aliis orphanis mamillas non dederunt*" (Wahl, 1977, pp. 57-8). For more variant readings, see Wahl (1977) and Mueller and Robbins (in Charlesworth, 1983, pp. 589-90).

same term ($\theta\eta\rho\iota\alpha$) in GrApcEz and which are serpents in VisEz. The infanticide committed by women is here emphasised by the refusal to give milk to their or other children. The women are punished in that part of their body with which they sinned: their breasts. Therefore, this is again an instance of a divine punishment (1) for infanticide meted out by either four wild beasts (Greek) or serpents (Latin) to women (3). It should be noted that VisEz 8-11 describes a sin committed on Sunday: Ezra sees men being ripped apart by dogs and consumed by fire who denied 'the Lord' and sinned with women on the Lord's Day (according to two manuscripts: before Mass), by which sin sexual intercourse on Sunday is probably meant — also forbidden in EÍ.

In the Long Latin text of ApcPa[590] §40 men and women are on a spit of fire; beasts (*bestiae*) are tearing at them. The angel of the torments punishes them fiercely. These men and women have killed their children. The children have appealed to God and the angels of torments to be avenged and they themselves are delivered to angels who bring them to a place of mercy. These beasts are probably a variant version of the beasts in ApcPe §26. They are a divine punishment (1) for people (3) who killed their children.

Another variant version of this motif may perhaps be found in Red. XI of ApcPa. This text, which comes from a 9th-century manuscript, gives extracts from the Long Latin text with some interpolations (Dwyer, 1988, p. 121). One of these interpolations is the fate of ten nuns (§9 and §11), of whom five are in Heaven and five are in Hell (*ibid.*, p. 123). The motif of these ten nuns is probably inspired by the biblical parable about the five wise and five foolish virgins (Mt 25:1-13). It is the fate of the five in Hell that is relevant here (§11). The five virgins are up to their hair in a fiery furnace[591]; the Lord does not hear their voice; they cry tears of blood, wear fiery crowns and their bodies are black. They are, moreover, tormented by beasts:

"UIdi quinque serpentes   I saw five serpents
sugens mamellas earu<u>m</u>,   sucking their breasts,
ET uidi .u. uiperas   and I saw five vipers
manducantes linguas earum   devouring their tongues
ET aues igneos   and birds
inpingentes oculos earu<u>m</u> (...)"   striking their fiery eyes[592]
(Dwyer, 1988, p. 129).

I would like to point out that here we again have the motif of serpents

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[590] The Coptic text of ApcPa mentions serpents in §39: women who used make-up and went to church in order to ensnare men are girt about by serpents that devour them.
[591] After the description of their punishment, Paul asks who these virgins are and then he describes them as standing in a fiery river that reaches up to their hair.
[592] Perhaps 'fiery birds striking their eyes' is meant.

sucking female breasts. However, these women did not commit infanticide or a sexual sin. They are punished because they are nuns who were neither merciful nor pious; they did not pray and kept neither vigils (like their NT predecessors!) nor fasts. Moreover, they spoke lies. The vipers devouring their tongues with which they lied is therefore another instance of a body part being punished because one has sinned with it. Perhaps their eyes are punished because the nuns neither closed them to pray nor kept them open during vigils. I do not see a direct reason why their breasts are under torture. It might be a symbolical punishment for not being merciful. It is interesting to note that this Red. XI, "like Redaction VI, may itself be an Irish production, or has at least been formed under Irish influence" (Wright, 1990, p. 34; for his evidence, see *op. cit.*). Wright (*ibid.*, p. 37) believes that this redaction was compiled by an Irish monk or nun who probably lived on the European continent. As this version gives special attention to nuns and their punishment he also suggests that it may have been written for a nunnery (*ibid.*) This text gives serpents as a divine punishment (1) serving as a sanction for women (3) who do not act according to what is expected of them, which here is leading a pious life and, in the other parallel apocalyptic texts, nurturing children.

Finally, the *Apocalypse of the Virgin* (ApcVirg) should be dealt with. There are two versions: a Greek (edition: James, 1893, pp. 115-26; dated to the 9th century; *ibid.*, p. 113) and an Ethiopic (edition: Chaine, 1909a, pp. 53-80; translation into Latin: *id.*, 1909b, pp. 45-68), and it is in the latter that this motif can be found. The earliest date proposed for the Ethiopic *Apocalypsis seu Visio Mariae Virginis* is the 7th century, but it is probably later (Schneemelcher, 1904/89, p. 627). I leave the Greek version aside as its date makes it improbable as a source for EÍ and because it does not give this relevant motif. The Ethiopic ApcVirg is dependent on ApcPa (*ibid.*). This text gives a few Sunday sins with their punishments (see Chaine, 1909b, pp. 66-7), but I will deal only with the variant version of the serpent punishment central here. People (*homines*) are hanging in the middle of the flames. Fiery serpents torment and devour them; fiery dogs bite them; fiery lions destroy their legs and fiery panthers tear their throats to pieces. This might be an exemplification of the four wild beasts in GrApcEz. They are *moniales*, 'nuns', who violated the rule, lost their virginity and lied. They killed their children, either through abortion or infanticide, sometimes by poison given by the fathers of the children. The children complain to God and are taken by an angel to a beautiful dwelling place. The parents are tormented for ever (Chaine, 1909b, p. 65). From this last sentence and the *homines* at the beginning of the description of the punishment it appears that both men and women are punished here[593].

To conclude this search for sources of the serpents in EÍ: I could find no snakes that fly in non-canonical texts. The serpents and beasts that were

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[593] Another punishment for monks involving fiery serpents and vipers occurs later (Chaine, 1909b, p. 67), but this sin and sanction are different from what is central here.

presented here serve as a divine punishment, but not for the transgression of Sunday observance. VisEz gives a 'Sunday sin': having sexual intercourse on Sunday (before Mass), but the punishment for this 'sin' is meted out by dogs to men and not by serpents to women. Serpents as a general divine punishment are found in ApcEl, where women are the victims and in LivPro where children and cattle are devoured by them. A series of punishments in Hell given by apocalypses have been described. Serpents and beasts punish people who killed, had an abortion and/or had illicit sexual intercourse. Creeping or venomous beasts torment murderers; (small) beasts coming from mothers' milk torment women who had an abortion or parents who killed their children in ApcPe. Beasts tear at parents who committed infanticide in ApcPa. Four wild beasts suck the breasts of a woman who killed her children in GrApcEz and serpents do the same in VisEz to women who did not let their children live. In Red. XI of ApcPa nuns are punished by serpents sucking their breasts, vipers eating their tongues and birds striking their eyes becase they did not lead a pious life. In the Ethiopic ApcVirg four kinds of beast, serpents among them, torment nuns with their partners who murdered or aborted their children. The sin that is punished in the Ethiopic ApcVirg is a double sin: on the one hand murdering or aborting children and on the other hand illicit sex. This sexual sin is also present in other texts, like the Coptic version of ApcPa and VisEz, where, moreover, female adulterers are described just before the serpent episode. I return below to this thematic cluster of illicit sex, children and Sunday rules.

In **Isidore**'s *Etymologiae* three kinds of flying serpent (2) are mentioned. First, he says that the dragon (*draco*), the largest specimen of the snakes and all terrestrial animals, is often drawn away from caves and borne into the air and the air is moved by the dragon (XII.4.4[594]). Isidore (XII.4.4-5) gives more characteristics — dragons are, for instance, born in Ethiopia and India — but he does not describe the dragon as a divine punishment (1). He mentions elephants as their victims (XII.4.5); human beings are not named explicitly (3). Isidore furthermore describes a flying serpent (*serpens volans*) called *iaculus* (XII.4.29) and he quotes Lucanus (39 — 65 AD), who calls the *iaculi* flying or winged (*volucres*). It jumps into trees. When an animal passes by under that tree the serpent throws itself on it and kills it. Therefore, this snake is not called a divine punishment (1) and Isidore mentions animals as its victims. Finally, Isidore's last kind of flying serpent (XII.4.29) is winged serpents (*serpentes cum alis*) called *sirenae*[595], which live in Arabia. They are faster than horses, are able to

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[594] A similar phrase can be read in Augustine's commentary on Ps 148, where the dragons and abysses are summoned to praise God (see Dekkers, Fraipont, 1956, p. 2172).

[595] In his *Commentary on Isaiah*, Jerome also explains the word *sirenae* as flying serpents/dragons (Adriaen, 1963, p. 166). The context is Is 13:21-22, where the destruction of Babylon is announced. The city will become a dwelling place for

fly and possess fast-acting poison[596].

Isidore thus describes winged/flying serpents (2) but he does not characterise them as a divine punishment (1) nor does he mention human beings (3) explicitly as their victims. I see therefore no direct connection between the snakes of Isidore and the serpents in EÍ.

Several versions of the **Latin Letter** mention serpents as a divine punishment for not observing Sunday (1). I will give a survey of the descriptions, in which I include monsters designated *bestia* which share characteristics with the serpents and beasts thus far presented in this section.

What is presumably the oldest version (Ta) gives two instances of winged serpents (*serpentes pinnatae*). The first time that serpents are mentioned in Ta is in a part of the manuscript where the editor could not read everything. Jesus threatens to send to 'you' hot stones that produce fire and flame, and: "*(in v)os serpentes pinnatas malas et pessimas, qui devorent [...]*" (Priebsch, 1936, p. 36), '[I will send to you] evil and vicious winged serpents, which will devour ??'. These serpents are winged (2) and seem to be sent to the people (3), although it is not certain what they will eat. The second reference is more legible. Sunday should be observed diligently; one is not even allowed to gather vegetables from the garden.

"Si haec feceritis, vos mulieres,	If you do that, you women,
mittam super vos	then I shall send upon you
serpentes pinnatas qui comedant	winged serpents to devour
et percutiant mamillas vestras"	and wound your breasts
(Priebsch, 1936, p. 37).	

This punishment combined with the gender of the victims is reminiscent of the punishments mentioned *sub* non-canonical scripture. The sin, however, is different: forbidden work on Sunday. These serpents are again a divine punishment (1); they have wings (2); and they are sent to the people (3).

In L1, Jesus first threatens to send wingless and winged locusts on the people, followed by evil peoples ("*gentes malas*"; Delehaye, 1928, p. 168) who will lead 'your' sons and daughters into captivity because the people do not honour Sunday and 'my' churches. This is why Jesus will send winged serpents ("*serpentes pinnatas*"; *ibid.*) and dark dogs ("*canes ravidos*"; *ibid.*). Jesus will deliver the people into the hands of their

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demons and beasts. *Dracones* are mentioned in verse 21; *sirenae* in verse 22. Jerome says that *sirenae* are the same as the (Hebrew) '*thennim*', which he translates as either demons, monsters or large, crested, flying dragons (*dracones*). According to André (1986, p. 156, n. 260), Tertullian also interprets *sirenae* as flying dragons but the text André refers to — *Adversus Marcionem*, 'Against Marcion', 3.5.3 — explains these creatures as 'preternatural fabulous women singers' (Evans, 1972, pp. 180-1).

[596] For the sources used by Isidore, see André (1986, pp. 134-7 for the dragon; *ibid.*, pp. 155-6 for the *iaculus*; and *ibid.*, p. 156 for the *sirena*).

enemies and bad weather will destroy the crops. This version of the Letter also agrees in its description of the serpents in all three characteristics of the snakes from Eĺ.

In P, the threats include bad weather, fire and large stones. This version also gives the special punishment for women. The command not to collect vegetables (*herbae*) from the garden on Sunday can be found among a series of rules. In P it is not directly followed by the serpent punishment; this comes somewhat further in the text. Jesus writes that he will send serpents (*serpentes*) to women who do not observe Sunday and the Saints' days. These serpents will hang on their breasts and suck them as if they are children. This is followed by the remark that the women are being punished because they lack chastity. They will give birth to children without eyes, hands and feet. This is because the women do not observe the night of Sunday, sin with their tongues and in the way they adorn themselves[597]. This is a new motif: it seems reasonable to suggest that the serpents are now a punishment for women who had sexual intercourse on Sunday night (preceding or following the day of Sunday?). The children they give birth to have an ailment and this is because of their mothers' sins. The serpents are a divine punishment (1) sent to people (3), but they are not winged.

In M2, serpents (*serpentes*) are mentioned among wingless locusts, locusts and other evils. In this version bad weather and hostile peoples are also mentioned. For instance, Saracens and evil peoples (*gentes*) will shed 'your' blood and lead 'you' away in captivity. This is all because the people do not observe Sunday (1). The serpents are again mentioned further on in the text. Jesus threatens: "I will exterminate the whole earth and I will send on you locusts, hailstorms and very strong serpents ("*serpentes validissimas*"; Priebsch, 1895, p. 60) that will devour you because of your injustice (*iniquitates*) and because of my holy Sunday that you do not observe". The punishment for women is mentioned too, but now it is a strange beast that is active. Jesus will send a rain-shower consisting of stones with a burning fire which will burn all the people and "*mittam vobis bestiam cum duobus capitibus et quam numquam vidistis, ut manducet mamillas mulierum (...)*" (*ibid.*, p. 61), 'I will send to you a beast with two heads and which you have never seen, which will devour the breasts of women'. Another manuscript tradition used by Priebsch, which he calles *W*, reads *bestias* instead of *bestiam* (*ibid.*). In short: M2 describes as punishment (1) serpents that are not winged but that do aim at people (3). The special female torture is connected with a two-headed beast or beasts.

Tou also has serpents (*serpentes*) which are mentioned among the two kinds of locust, bad weather, enemies and other evils. Therefore, this is

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[597] Cp. this with the non-canonical texts mentioned above: for instance, Red. XI of ApcPa where nuns are punished by (serpents sucking their breasts and) vipers eating their tongues because they sinned with their tongues, and the Coptic text of ApcPa where women who used make-up are girt about by serpents.

another instance of serpents as a divine punishment (1) sent to the people (3).

In V, women in particular are again addressed. The same motif occurs: if they collect vegetables in the garden on Sunday, Jesus will send on them flying serpents[598] ("*serpentes pinnatos*"; Priebsch, 1899, p. 134) which will tear their breasts to pieces until the end (the text does not say whether this is the end of their lives or the end of time). This is immediately followed by a sentence saying that if 'you' do not observe Sunday, children will be born who are deaf, blind and lame and who will die. No sexual sin is mentioned.

Finally, there is a Latin Letter that is beyond the scope of this study as it is dated *c.* 1201, but because the motif dealt with here is present in it I advert to it. Moreover, the Letter may very well be older than the date when it was transported: about 1201, Abbot Eustace of Flay brought a Sunday Letter from Normandy to England. This text has been transmitted in the *Chronicle* of Roger of Hoveden (edition: Röhricht, 1890, pp. 438-40[599]). This text also mentions enemies and bad weather as punishments when people do not observe Sunday. Worse beasts ("*bestias pejores*"; *ibid.*, p. 439) will devour the breasts of 'your' women.

In conclusion: the serpents in the Latin Sunday Letters are always in the company of bad weather and almost always the threat of enemies is present (not in P). They are always a punishment for the sin of not observing Sunday (1), but in some cases there is a certain additional specification of this sin: the collection of vegetables from the garden on Sunday is mentioned in Ta and V; P gives sexual intercourse on Sunday night and M2 injustice. Three Letters describe winged serpents (2): Ta, L1 and V. The serpents always have people as their victims; in half of the cases they are women and their breasts in particular are in danger of being attacked. It should be noted that beasts instead of serpents are given twice (in M2 and Eustace's Sunday Letter).

It is now possible to distinguish two main lines: first, there is the Old Testament line where divine punishments are the consequences of not observing God's commandments. This line is represented by the enemies, the bad weather and (flying) serpents. It is important to observe that the designation in some Vetus Latina manuscripts of Is 14:29 — *serpentes pennati* — is almost the same as the *serpentes pinnatae* or *pinnati* in the Latin Letters. The second line is given by the later developments in non-canonical scripture. Here beasts (ApcPe, ApcPa, GrApcEz), serpents (VisEz) and four kinds of beast, among which serpents, (ApcVirg) punish abortion and/or infanticide. In two of these texts illicit sex is also punished by beasts: dogs torment men who had sex on Sunday (VisEz) and nuns,

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[598] Version V also mentions flying worms (*vermes volantes*). For more about this, see 3.3.2.5.

[599] For more about this see Jones (1975, pp. 166-71), who characterises Eustace as "a preacher of repentance and miracle worker, who claimed as divine authorization for his mission a letter from Christ in heaven" (*ibid.*, p. 166).

who are not supposed to have sex at all, are bitten by dogs, lions, serpents and panthers (ApcVirg). This genre of texts also gives a precedent for the injuring of female breasts, which is found in ApcEl (serpents), GrApcEz (beasts), VisEz (serpents), Red. XI of ApcPa (serpents) and perhaps it is hinted at in ApcPe (beasts). It is now obvious that the first line is followed in EÍ; both lines can be found in the Latin Sunday Letters.

To my knowledge there are no parallels of the flying serpents as a divine punishment in **Hiberno-Latin texts**. There is, for instance, a gloss on Ps 148 where dragons are classified as a species of winged serpents (see McNamara, 1986, p. 308; also for related texts) but there is no direct connection with the divine sanction central here.

Serpents can be found in four of the six **Old English homilies**. They are referred to by two different terms: *nœdre*, 'serpent', and *wyrm*, 'serpent, snake; worm'. The mention of serpents/worms (*wyrmas*) in Hom. A (Napier, 1883, p. 209, l. 17) is not relevant here: the bites of these beasts are part of a general description of Hell. The other three sermons, however, give important descriptions.

Hom. B (Napier, 1883, p. 223, ll. 8-13) gives all three aspects of the serpents: they are a divine punishment for not observing Sunday (1); they fly (2) and they are sent upon the people (3). Hom. B bears much similarity to EÍ: after the description of the cry of the four-footed animals (cp. EÍ §9) the section about flying serpents follows (cp. EÍ §10). If the people do not observe Sunday, 'I' (*i.e.* Christ) will send over 'you' great storms (*micele stormas* (l. 10); cp. *anbthine móra*); hailstones (*hagolstanas* (l. 10); cp. *casra troma ailchide*); flying serpents (*fleogende neddran* (ll. 10-1); cp. *nathraig lúamnig*) which 'you' cannot endure; sulphurous fire (*swelicne leg* (l. 11); cp. *srobtene*); and Christ will send a 'heathen' people (*hœþenfolc* (l. 11); cp. *gennti, cenél na pagán*) who will take away 'you and your children'. Hom. B adds, thus, that the serpents are unbearable and is highly similar to EÍ §10.

The three characteristics are also present in Hom E. Serpents are mentioned in three places in this sermon. Hom. E describes how Christ threatens to send flying serpents (*fleogende nœdran*; Napier, 1883, p. 229, ll. 10-2) that will devour 'your' breasts and 'your' crops[600]. Somewhat further on into the text, serpents/worms and raging birds/fowls (*wyrmas and fuhlas wedende*; *ibid.*, p. 231, ll. 11-4) are mentioned, which will destroy 'your' crops if 'you' do not believe this written text. This is followed by the mention of a 'heathen' people, who will take away 'your' possessions, life, wife and child unless 'you' pay the tithes to God's Church (ll. 14-7). If 'you' gather vegetables on Sunday, 'I' (Christ/the Lord) will send winged serpents (*nœdran gefiðrede*) which will eat 'your'

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[600] Dodd (1908/68) translates *bled* with 'fruit', but according to Hall (1894/1962, *s.v. blēd* I) the word has several meanings: 'shoot, branch, flower, blossom, leaf, foliage, fruit, harvest, crops'.

breast till the coming of death (ll. 17-20). Then a threat is uttered about babies: children will be born who do not see nor hear nor walk and 'you' will also perish (ll. 20-2). Therefore, Hom. E adds the crops as the serpents' target and is specific about how they will punish humanity. There is similarity with some of the Latin Sunday Letters — the serpents devouring breasts and the babies born with an ailment — but the gender of the victims is not mentioned, nor is a sexual sin referred to. Some of the other punishments from EÍ §10 are also present in this sermon — for instance, large hailstones (ibid., p. 228, ll. 5-6), burning rains and sulphurous fire (ibid., p. 232, ll. 1-2) — but they are found in a different place.

Hom. F only gives two aspects: the divine punishment (1) and people as victims (3). The serpents (næddran; Priebsch, 1899, p. 137, ll. 85-9) will bite 'your' flesh, hang on 'your' breasts and suck them just as 'your' children to punish everyone for the impurity when 'you' do not hold Sunday sacred. Just as Hom. E, F adds the threat about the babies born with an ailment, but F is even more explicit: if people beget children in the night of Sunday or of other sacred days, then from this children will be born without eyes, feet and hands and they will be dumb, for the holy night must be kept pure (ll. 89-93). This sermon also mentions the punishment of the people and their children being taken away by 'heathens' (ll. 52-4), the burning rain and sulphurous fire (l. 55).

The Old English homilies thus present the same two lines as the Latin Sunday Letters do: the OT (foreign enemies, bad weather and flying snakes) and non-canonical sanctions (the torture of breasts). Hom. B is obviously closest to EÍ in the way it describes the serpent sanction as punishment for not observing Sunday. Homs. B and E give the same three aspects of the flying serpents as EÍ; Hom. F omits their ability to fly. The sins mentioned in these three homilies connected with the (flying) serpents are thus: not keeping Sunday holy (B); collecting vegetables on Sunday (E), and having sex on sacred nights (F). These sins have their parallels in the Latin Sunday Letters: the first one of course in all of them; the collecting of vegetables in Ta and V[601]; sexual intercourse in P[602]. In EÍ collecting vegetables is not mentioned, but sexual intercourse on Sunday is forbidden (§17). The flying snakes belong to the general divine Sunday sanctions; the only punishment that is directly related to the sin in EÍ is the one concerning the fiery horse. The gender of the serpents' victims is not named in the Old English homilies, just as in EÍ, whereas some Latin Letters (perhaps inspired by non-canonical traditions) mention women as their target.

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[601] According to Priebsch (1899, p. 134), Hom. E is the translation of the Latin Sunday Letter V.

[602] See Priebsch (1899, p. 139), who refers to some early medieval texts where sexual intercourse on sacred nights is forbidden and to a sermon perhaps written by Caesarius of Arles, which connects this sin with the birth of lepers, epileptics and possessed people. (See furthermore Priebsch, 1936, pp. 11-2.)

In **Old and Middle Irish texts** the following relevant serpents can be found. In ICUC §14 the four rivers of Hell are mentioned: a river of toads/frogs, of serpents, of fire and of snow[603]. These serpents obviously are a divine punishment (1), although they are not explicitly connected with transgressions on Sunday. The snakes have no wings (2) but seem to be water beasts instead. They punish human souls (3) and devils. They are, therefore, different from the flying snakes in EÍ in most respects. They are not sent upon living people on earth.

Among the divine punishments (1) in Hell described in SLB are very swift, poisonous snakes which are around the Devil's city (SLB §20). These snakes are, therefore, infernal and without wings as are the serpents in ICUC, although differently situated.

Hell is described in Canto V of SnR and, among the many divine punishments (1), one can also find snakes. Just as in SLB, many very active serpents are around the city of Hell (lines 895-6). In this text the snakes are attacking everybody (3[604]). Moreover, many seas of torment are around the wall of Hell: the text names seven of them (lines 909-13) and one is 'a poisonous sea of serpents' (line 912).

Serpents as divine punishment (1) in Hell also occur in FA §25. A crowd stands, bound to fiery pillars, in a fiery sea[605] that reaches their chins. They have around their waists fiery chains in the form of snakes and their faces are blazing. There is no sign of wings (2) but again people are being punished (3), albeit after their deaths.

There is one more section in FA that needs to be dealt with. As mentioned earlier (note 454), according to Seymour (1922, pp. 41-2), FA §28 (and TM §31, see below) could perhaps be traced to the punishment(s) involving children from ApcPe §26 (see above). FA §28 paints the following horrible, hellish picture: people in red, fiery cloaks[606] are being choked by demons. The demons moreover incite stinking, raw dogs to devour and consume them. The people have fiery red collars around their necks and are alternately thrown up to the firmament and down into the depths of Hell. The LB version then reads:

"Noidin tra ocus maccoim ic a	"Children and youths are constantly
n-athcuma ocus ca letrad	lacerating them and hacking at them
do gres di cech aird"	from all sides"
(Colwell, 1952, p. 263)	(*ibid.*, p. 264).

The people thus punished are those in (monastic) orders who transgressed

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[603] In FA §30 the four rivers of Hell consist of fire, snow, poison and dark, black water.

[604] According to another reading, they are 'on every circuit of the city' (see Greene, Kelly, 1976, p. 15, n. 2).

[605] Colwell (1952, p. 246) translates 'a fiery wall', but the Irish text reads *muir tened*.

[606] The Irish reads *cassla derga tentide*. Although Colwell comments upon the motif of fiery cloaks (1952, pp. 265-6), he omits 'red, fiery' in his translation.

their vows, hypocrites, liars, people who pretend to be miracle workers. About the children the following is said (and this is also found in LU):

"Is iat immórro na naídin filet ocá
n-athchuma inn áesa graid
.i. it é sin in lucht ro herbad dóib
do lessugud,
ocus ní ros lesaigset
ocus ní ros cairgetár imó pecdaib"
(Colwell, 1952, p. 263)

"The children who are
maiming the clerics
are those who were entrusted to them
for correction,
but who were not corrected by them,
nor reprimanded for their sins"
(*ibid.*, p. 264).

Clerics are thus punished by the children they have wronged during life. Colwell (1952, p. 268) also suggests that this motif may come from ApcPe: in ApcPe §26 the neglect of physical parenthood and in FA §28 the neglect of spiritual parenthood is punished[607].

The other text referred to by Seymour is TM. In this text, Hell is shown to the apostles (§§30-3). Mary pleads for the inhabitants of Hell and Christ grants them three hours respite on Sunday (§34[608]). The punishment that is meant by Seymour is as follows (TM §31):

"a lama ar lasad tre bithu
agus ni fedais fegad suas idir
d'iarraid fortachta
agus naidin bega as a lesaib
ag a n-ithi (Laud Misc. 610)/
'g a ndiul (LFF)"

"Their hands were blazing continu-
ously and they could not look up at
all to seek help,
and little children out of their thighs
were eating them (Laud)/
were sucking at them (LFF[609])"

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[607] It should be noted that in §4 of ApcPa Red. VI — one of the two versions with Irish links — people who promised but neglected to be spiritual parents are also punished (see Silverstein, 1935, p. 84).

[608] FA §2 seems to refer to this text when it says that all the apostles were shown Hell by Christ on the day of the death of Mary. (Before this Peter and Paul are referred to as people who received revelations about Hell.)

[609] Donahue translates the LFF phrase: "were taking vengeance upon them". The translation of this sentence has given rise to divergent opinions on two points: first, the identification of the punishing creatures; second, their action according to LFF. Máire Herbert has kindly sent me the relevant sentence from LFF: "7 naid(h?)in beca ar lasad asa leasuibh ga ndiul". She translates: "They saw other people in great pain, with their hands perpetually ablaze, unable to look up to seek help, with little burning leeches sucking at their thighs" (Herbert, McNamara, 1989, p. 130). Seymour's (1922, p. 38) summary of the LFF text reads: "Others have their hands burning, and little infants in flames (hanging) out of their sides (breasts?) sucking at them". Therefore, Herbert sees the word *naidin* as a form of *náit*, 'a leech (worm)'; Seymour and Donahue have chosen for *noídiu*, 'an infant, a young child'. The form *diul* that describes what these creatures are doing seems to have been taken by Donahue as a verbal noun of *dílaid*, 'satisfies, appeases, (...), expiates, atones for, (...)'. The form *-diúl* is, however, the dat. sg. of the verbal noun of *dinid* and means 'the act of sucking', which is in accordance with Herbert's translation which I have followed (see also

(Donahue, 1942, pp. 52, 57)   (*ibid.*, pp. 53, 65).

The people who are punished in this way understood neither the words of God, nor the canons of the Lord nor the words of penance although they were priests. Seymour (1922, p. 41) takes the view that if this motif is not to be traced to ApcPe then it might come from a lost apocalypse, usually called the 'Seven Heavens' apocryphon[610]. The people punished are clerics ignorant of their spiritual duties. It is not clear why the clerics are punished by children in TM. If Seymour is right about ApcPe as the source of this motif, then there is a double development in the Irish texts: first, mothers/parents (ApcPe) have been replaced by clerics (TM, FA); second, the refusal to take upon oneself parental duties (ApcPe) has been replaced by ignorance (TM)/negligence (FA) of spiritual duties.

Serpents are mentioned several times in TB (§§10, 15, 36, 45, 107), but they are neither a divine punishment (1) nor are they winged (2). Interesting are the 'weather dragons', referred to in 3.3.2.1 (TB §29), which cause thunder and lightning — weather phenomena that accompany the flying serpents in EÍ. There is, however, no sign of any connection between these two kinds of monster.

In *Gnímradha in seseadh lai láin*, 'The Works of the Sixth Day' (GSLL; edition and translation: Carney, 1969, pp. 151-63), an Early Middle Irish poem (see *ibid.*, p. 148), seven kinds of poisonous serpent are listed (stanzas 10 and 11). The last one is a winged airy serpent (*nathir etteach etrom*). The word for 'winged' is different from the expression used in EÍ (*lúamnach, lúaimnech,* 'flying'); moreover, there is mention neither of a divine punishment nor of people being attacked. There is thus only one similarity: the wings (2). (Maura Carney (*ibid.*) proposes Pliny and Isidore as sources for the descriptions of the serpents in this poem, but I leave this further aside.)

In ScCC, Cú Chulainn is summoned from the dead by St Patrick in order to impress and convert King Lóegaire. The hero appears with his charioteer in his famous chariot. In order to convince the king of his

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DIL, *s.v. deól,* where an example is given of someone being eaten by worms.) It is difficult to decide about the identity of the creatures, especially in the light of ApcPe as the possible source of this punishment in FA and TM: the original punishment mentions both children and beasts as the ones who are tormenting the punished souls (by flashing bolts of lightning at them or devouring them).

[610] Seymour (1922, p. 41) suggests that this lost apocalypse may have been current in Ireland and that there is a very corrupt fragment still extant. He refers to the fragment from a Reichenau manuscript of the 8th or 9th century, edited by Dom Donatien de Bruyne (1907, pp. 323-4). According to James (1919, p. 16), this apocalypse should be regarded as a source to FA and the fragment might come from 'a Celtic workshop'. I see, however, no connection between the punishment central here and the fragment. (For more about this fragment, see 3.3.2.5 *sub* Hiberno-Latin texts.) Seymour (1922, p. 42) furthermore refers to two texts that give a variant version of this punishment, but they are beyond the scope of this study because they are too late.

identity, Cú Chulainn must speak of his famous deeds. A part of this is in poetry and one of the adventures is interesting in this context: the journey to the land of Scáth (stanzas X-XXIV). The grimness of this land is expressed by the occurrence of iron, severed heads and monsters. The fortress of Scáth (*Dún Scáith*) has locks of irons (stanza X); a rampart of irons on each of the seven walls around the fortress, with nine heads thereon (XI) and finally doors of iron. Cú Chulainn kicks these doors to pieces with his foot (XII). In the fortress is a pit from which ten serpents burst forth (XIII). Cú Chulainn destroys them, rendering them into small pieces with his fists (XIV). Hereafter he encounters toads/frogs, sharp beaked beasts (*míla géra gulbnecha*; XV) and horrible, draconic monsters (see below, 3.3.2.5[611]).

These serpents are neither a divine punishment nor are they winged. They do attack a human being (3), but that is not enough similarity for this to be considered a variant version. There is something else I would like to point out. In the texts given above, serpents were also described in the company of toads/frogs and other monsters. In ICUC §14 first a river of toads/frogs, then a river of serpents was mentioned. Immediately after the four rivers of Hell the Monster of Hell (for more about this, see 3.3.2.5) is described. SLB §20 describes Hell and mentions in succession (I only enumerate the monsters): dogs (also described as *géra*, 'sharp'), toads/frogs (also described as *géra*), serpents, lions, iron birds, cats and finally, the Monster of Hell. SnR Canto V describes Hell and enumerates bestial hordes (*buidni bíastai*; lines 877-80), the Monster of Hell (lines 881-8), beetles, worms, wolves (also described as *gér*), beasts/monsters (*bíasta*; lines 889-92), toads/frogs, serpents (lines 893-6), fierce monsters, red scaly beasts, and lions (lines 897-900). In these three texts, serpents are always preceded by toads/ frogs. In ScCC they are also mentioned in each other's company, albeit in a different order. Another point that should be noted is that after Cú Chulainn's stories about his adventures he reaches a climax in his speech by making it clear to King Lóegaire that his sufferings on sea and land are nothing compared with a single night with 'the Demon with rage' (stanza XXV). The hero who killed and crushed monsters with his fists is powerless in Hell: the Demon crushes him with one finger (XXVIII). Although this text does not describe the Monster of Hell as ICUC, SLB and SnR do, it does refer to the Demon. This is the same as the Monster, *i.e.* the Devil. Remarkable in this text, therefore, is thus

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[611] In this poem there is also mention of a king's daughter who gives a cauldron and three cows that are carried off by Cú Chulainn (stanzas XVIII-XXI). Cp. the second part of TBF, in which a hero from Connaught (Froech) and a hero from Ulster (Conall Cernach) travel to a hostile foreign country in order to retrieve the former's wife, children and cattle. The fortress which they have to conquer first is guarded by a dangerous serpent. This serpent jumps around Conall Cernach's waist and leaves him again when they have plundered the fortress. Obviously, the parallels are only meagre but there is some similarity. I have not dealt with the serpent from TBF because it is not a divine punishment, nor does it fly or attack the hero.

that the beasts described elsewhere as horrible inhabitants of Hell are here inhabitants of a fearsome foreign country. Cú Chulainn tells how he made short work of them before going on to emphasise how horrible Hell is. Thanks to St Patrick, Cú Chulainn can now go to Heaven and King Lóegaire, sufficiently impressed, becomes a Christian. It is as if in this text hellish monsters have been transported to a heroic setting in order to be used as a means to depict a Hell even more grim as propaganda for the Christian faith.

Summarising: in Old and Middle Irish texts serpents which are a divine punishment (1) can be found in Hell. They are not a specific Sunday sanction. The hellish serpents are located in a river (ICUC), around a town (SLB, SnR), and in a poisonous or fiery sea (SnR, FA). In these Irish texts, children punishing negligent (FA) or ignorant clerics (TM) are possible variant versions of the motif of mothers/parents punished by children and/or beasts/snakes from ApcPe and other related non-canonical texts. The snakes in Hell do not have wings (2). Weather dragons are mentioned in TB, but they seem to have no connection with the snakes from EÍ. Winged snakes can be found in GSLL, but again there is no link with EÍ: they are neither a divine punishment nor do they attack people. Dangerous snakes in a foreign country are given in ScCC. Here, the interesting aspect is that they are in the company of toads/frogs and other monsters as in the Hell descriptions, but there is no connection with EÍ's serpents. The snakes serving as a divine punishment in Hell attack human souls, and in ScCC the serpents aim at a human hero (3). This differs from EÍ in that there the serpents are a threat to living human beings, whereas in these texts they actually harm the people or their souls.

To conclude: the texts dealt with in this section thus show two lines. First the 'Old Testament' line which is present in EÍ. When people do not obey God's commands then serpents, together with foreign enemies and horrible weather, will punish them. This biblical line is also found in the Latin Letters and Old English homilies, where the serpents are a divine punishment for the non-observance of Sunday (1), as in EÍ. Flying serpents (2) are found in the *Book of Isaiah* as well as in the Latin Letters and Old English homilies. The closest parallel with EÍ is found in Hom. B. The serpents are a threat to or attack people (3), who in the Latin Letters are sometimes specified as women; in the Old English homilies the gender of the victims is not stated, as is also the case in EÍ.

I have called the second line a non-canonical line: it is found in apocalyptic texts. Women (and sometimes men too) are attacked by beasts or serpents as a divine punishment. The sins committed by these victims differ: infanticide, abortion, illicit sex (adultery, sex by nuns or sex on Sunday), injustice and collecting vegetables on Sunday are mentioned. The correspondence between sins and punishments, which was noted in the preceding section about the fiery horse, is also present here: women who have killed their children and begrudged them the milk from their breasts are punished by beasts/serpents sucking or eating their breasts and to people who have sex on Sunday will be born children with an ailment (or

those people will be ripped apart by dogs in Hell). Two non-canonical texts (ApcEl and LivPro) give terrestrial punishments; the other non-canonical apocalyptic texts describe these punishments as meted out in Hell; the Latin Letters, Old English homilies and Eĺ deal with (threats of) punishments on earth.

The Old and Middle Irish texts seem to stand slightly apart from the other kinds of text. The possible parallels of the punishment from ApcPe and other non-canonical texts in FA and TM have a somewhat different character: there is no mention of a Sunday sin, nor of women, infanticide or illicit sex. In FA, clerics who neglected their spiritual parenthood are punished; in TM priests who are ignorant of their spiritual duties fall prey to the sanctions. The serpents found in Hell in these texts in Irish are a divine punishment but they do not have wings; serpents with wings and the serpents attacking Cú Chulainn are not a divine punishment.

3.3.2.5 Five monsters from Hell

The monsters from Eĺ are designated *bíastai*, of which the Latin equivalent is *bestiae*. There are quite a few instances in the **Vulgate** where *bestiae* serve as a divine punishment (1) albeit not for the transgression of Sunday rules. *Bestiae*, or 'wild beasts', can be found among general divine punishments such as the sword, foreign enemies, diseases and bad weather. They are a danger to the living (Lv 26:22; Dt 32:24; Ps 79:14 (as a metaphor for enemies); Sap 12:9; Sir 39:36; Is 18:6; 56:9; Ier 12:9; 15:3; Ez 5:17; 14:15, 21; 33:27; 39:4, 17; Os 2:12; 13:8; Apc 6:8) or they will devour the corpses of people lying unburied in the fields (Dt 28:26; Ps 78:2; Ier 7:33; 16:4; 19:7; 34:20; Ez 29:5; 32:4). A special kind of punishment featuring *bestiae* are the punishments for the Egyptians in Sap 11:16-20: serpents, beasts (*bestiae*), bears, lions and the strange beasts with the fiery eyes (quoted in 3.3.2.1); and in Sap 16:1, 5 which refers to beasts and serpents. Often these *bestiae* that serve as a divine punishment are accompanied by other animals: in the majority of the cases by birds, but other creatures that include serpents, bears, lions, panthers, scorpions, locusts and dogs also occur.

Two relevant adjectives can be found in connection with *bestia*: *mala*, 'evil', (in Lv 26:6; Ez 14:21) and *pessima*, 'vicious' (Ez 5:17; 14:15; 34:25). These words can also be found in the Latin Sunday Letters: the small beasts called *scinifes* are *pessima* (see 3.3.2.1) and serpents are called *mala* and *pessima* (see 3.3.2.4). For more about this, see below.

In Eĺ the monsters are held back by God's mercy (7); in the OT the wild beasts will not strike if the people keep God's commandments (Lv 26:6; Ez 34:25, 28; Os 2:18).

As will have become clear in the preceding sections of this study, the OT has influenced the portrayal of the Sunday punishments. The wild beasts described here will probably also have been of some influence, but they do not share with the five Irish monsters the important characteristic of being located in the depths of Hell (2).

The concept of 'Hell' is not present in the Hebrew OT. The dead dwell

in שאול, 'the Underworld', which is also called אבדון, 'destruction,
Abyss'; ארץ, 'the Earth'; בור, 'the Pit'; מות, '(the Realm of) Death', and
שחת, 'the Ditch'. The powers of Chaos are in the Deep. The Greek NT
refers to it by ᾅδης. The Underworld is variously described as the primor-
dial ocean, the (deep) sea, the subterranean waters, the depths of the earth
or as a fiery pit. It is also called תהום, 'the Deep' (LXX: ἄβυσσος), the
Abyss. The Abyss is the abode of the dead, a place of torment, or the
dwelling place of the forces of evil (see Grether, 1992).

These concepts are predecessors of the idea of 'Hell': in the Vulgate
the Realm of the Dead is translated by *inferus* or *infernus*, 'Hell, the
Underworld[612]'. The search for monsters in Hell will, therefore, include
beasts rising from the sea or Abyss and the beasts that the Vulgate
describes as being located in Hell. I will begin with the latter, which are
more general divine punishments, and end with the former, which are
specific divine punishments and can be found in — again — apocalyptic
contexts.

The general divine punishment mentioned above of corpses being eaten
by wild beasts (*bestiae*) takes place above the ground; it has a counterpart
under the ground where the bodies of the dead are eaten by worms (*tineae,
vermes*). These animals are a natural consequence when the dead body
decays. In this sense we find them in Iob 17:14; 21:26; 24:20; Sir 7:19;
10:13; 19:3; Is 14:11; I Mcc 2:62. As mentioned in 3.3.2.4, the natural
consequences of death may have inspired ideas about a supernatural fate.
For instance, Sir 10:13 (after death serpents, beasts and worms are
humankind's inheritance) could have been a basis for a transition from
natural decay to supernatural sanction, especially in combination with the
shift in terms and ideas, when the Abode of the Dead is replaced by the
concept of Hell. This supernatural punishment is explicit in Idt 16:21 and
Is 66:24. This last verse is important because it is quoted in the NT (Mc
9:43, 45, 47) and the idea can also be found in non-canonical texts and the
Latin Letters. Fire and worm(s) serve here as an eternal punishment, with
which the *Book of Isaiah* ends:

"et egredientur et videbunt   And they shall go out and see the
cadavera virorum qui praevaricati   corpses of the men who have trans-
sunt in me   gressed against me.
vermis eorum non morietur   Their worm will not die
et ignis eorum non extinguetur (...)"   and their fire will not be extinguished
(Is 66:24).

These beasts serving as a general punishment (1) of corpses under the
earth/in the Underworld (2) are, however, not named *bestiae*[613], nor is
the figure five mentioned (3). They are, moreover, small instead of large
(4). They are probably horrible (5) but that is not made explicit. There is

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[612] In the Vulgate giants are in Hell as well (Prv 9:18; Is 14:9).
[613] The term *bestia* only occurs in Sir 10:13.

no indication that they want to leave Hell (6), nor of God's mercy restraining them (7). There are thus too many differences between these beasts, which could be called the vermin of Hell, and the five huge monsters from Eĺ.

There are other monsters in the Vulgate that are designated *bestiae*. They will be treated now, among the special divine punishments which can be found in apocalyptic texts in the Bible.

In his nocturnal vision the prophet Daniel sees four great beasts (*quattuor bestiae grandes*) rising from the sea (Dn 7:3). The first beast is like a lioness and has eagle's wings. The wings are removed from this beast, which stands on feet as a human. Finally, it is given a heart (Dn 7:4). The second one is a beast like a bear which has three rows of teeth in its mouth. It receives the command to arise and devour much flesh (Dn 7:5). The third monster is like a panther (*pardus*) with four bird's wings and four heads; this beast is given power (Dn 7:6). Finally, the fourth beast (already referred to in 3.3.2.1) is described: a frightful (*terribilis*), strange (*mirabilis*), very strong beast with large iron teeth, which devours, crushes and tramples the rest under its feet. It has ten horns (Dn 7:7). Then it grows another little horn (making a total of eleven) and three of the former horns are removed (which makes eight). The little horn has human eyes and a mouth that speaks great things (Dn 7:8). Daniel sees how this beast is slain, destroyed and burned (Dn 7:11), and the other three beasts lose their power (Dn 7:12). After an explanation given to Daniel, attention is once more focussed upon the fourth beast. It is emphasised that this beast is different from the others and exceedingly terrible (*terribilis nimis*) with its iron teeth and claws (Dn 7:19).

These beasts can be characterised as apocalyptic divine punishments (1) symbolising foreign nations. They arise from the sea, which has affinities with Hell (2). There are not five (3) but four of these *bestiae*. They are larges (*grandes*; 4) and they are horrible, especially the fourth one (5). They have come to earth to punish the people (6) and were not restrained by God's mercy (7), although in the end they will lose their power. These beasts are thus not the same as the five beasts from Eĺ, but there is some similarity.

The *Apocalypse of John* supplies even more monsters. The monstrous locusts that come from the Abyss have been described in 3.3.2.2, where Apc 9:7-11 is also quoted. These locusts are, like the five monsters, a divine punishment (1). They come from the Pit of the Abyss (2). They are not five in number (3), but they will torment people on earth for five months. Moreover, they appear after the sound of the fifth trumpet when the fifth angel opens the Pit. If the similarity with horses also pertains to their size then they are large (4), but this is not certain. There is no explicit reference to their being horrible (5) but it is clear that they are. It may very well be that they are eager to punish the people (6) and have to wait till the End of Time, when the horrors described in this apocalyptic book take place. There is no allusion to God's mercy. The monstrous horses that are described immediately after the locusts (Apc 9:17-19) are also a divine punishment (1), but that is all they share with the five

monsters. Obviously, the locusts have more characteristics in common with them but they are not called *bestiae*.

There is another monster which is designated *bestia* and seems to be important in this context. This is the beast rising from the Abyss (Apc 11:7; 17:8)/the sea (Apc 13:1). It has seven heads and ten horns, ten diadems and names of blasphemy upon its heads (Apc 13:1). It is like a panther; its feet are like a bear's and its mouth is like a lion's (Apc 13:2). This beast seems to be a combination of the four beasts from Daniel's nocturnal vision. In the Apc it works together with the Dragon (see especially Apc 12, where it is stated in verse 9 that the Dragon is the same as the old serpent, Satan and the Devil) and the beast that rises from the earth (Apc 13:11-16[614]), which is also called the false prophet (see Apc 19:20). From the mouths of these three — the Dragon, the beast of the Abyss/sea and the false prophet — come forth three unclean spirits like frogs (Apc 16:13).

It is of course speculation, but as the beast from the sea/Abyss from the Apc and the four beasts from Dn are clearly connected, could it be that these four monsters plus one makes the number five? They will punish humanity (1); they live in the sea/Abyss/Hell (2); they are five in number (3); they are large (4); they are horrible (5); they are meant to go to the earth to punish the people (6) but are restrained by God (7) until the time is right. On the other hand, the monstrous locusts from the Apc share several characteristics with the monsters from Eí too (I will show below that there is textual evidence that seems to support this interpretation). For now it suffices to conclude that from this search into monsters from the Vulgate these two sets — the five apocalyptic monsters (four from Dn and one from the Apc) and the monstrous locusts (from the Apc) that will punish for five months — are the closest to the five beasts from Eí.

Divine punishments administered in the Underworld can also be found in **non-canonical scripture**. The place of the dead has several names, such as Abyss (or abysses), Gehenna[615], Hades, Sheol, Tartarus and, of course, Hell. Sometimes the Underworld itself is described in personifying terms: Sheol opens her mouth and swallows the sinners (see, for instance, I En 56:8). The guards of Hell may have a monstrous appearance (see, for instance, II En 42:1), but these creatures are a kind of angel and I will concentrate here upon beasts living in Hell.

The non-canonical texts that are related to the OT often describe the place of torment as an eternal fire; there are no monsters mentioned that make it even worse. A few of these texts, however, add beasts that torment

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[614] This image of a beast rising from the sea (Abyss) and a beast rising from the earth may very well have had some inspiration from the monster couple Leviathan and Behemoth, of which the former is traditionally connected with the sea and the latter with the land.

[615] For more about Gehenna, see J.J. Collins in Charlesworth (1983, p. 352, n. x2).

the sinners. The wicked will be thrown 'under many terrible infernal beasts' in the immeasurable darkness of Gehenna (SibOr 2:291-292). These beasts are not further specified. Some of the beasts that Ezra sees in Hell are already described in 3.3.2.4: the four wild beasts that suck the breasts of the woman who killed children instead of giving them milk (GrApcEz 5:1-3). Ezra also sees the unsleeping worm ($\sigma\kappa\dot{\omega}\lambda\eta\xi$) and the fire, which both consume sinners (GrApcEz 4:20). Obviously, this goes back to Is 66:24 (and Mc 9), which is quoted above. The lions emitting flames (VisEz 3), the dogs ripping sinners apart (VisEz 8), and the serpents sucking female breasts (VisEz 54) from this Latin version of the text can be found in 3.3.2.4. Moreover, the following monsters are described: first, there is a the worm in a new form (VisEz 34-35):

"Et ambulavit in antea et	"And he walked as before and
vidit in obscuro loco	he saw in an obscure place
vermem immortalem,	an immortal worm,
eius magnitudinem dinumerare non potuit.	its magnitude he was not able to reckon.
[Et ambulavi et	[And I walked and
vidi in obscuro loco	I saw in an obscure place
vermem inexstinguibilem;	an inextinguishable worm.
longitudinem et altitudinem eius enumerare non potui,	Its length and height I was not able to reckon,
de qua habebat LXX cubitos[616].]	at least seventy cubits.]
Et ante os eius	And in front of its mouth
stabant multi peccatores,	stood many[617] sinners,
et cum inducit flatum,	and when it drew in a breath,
ingrediebantur in os eius quasi muscae,	like flies they entered into its mouth;
cum autem respiraret,	then, when it exhaled,
exiebant omnes alio colore"	they all come forth with a different colour[618]"
(Wahl, 1977, p. 54)	(Mueller, Robbins in Charlesworth, 1983, p. 588).

The people thus punished were full of every bad thing; they did neither confession nor penance (manuscript L omits the sentence about confession and penance; VisEz 36). The worm has grown in this text and fulfils a specific action, punishing a certain class of sinners. The second 'new' group of monsters are lions and little dogs or (according to some manuscripts:) camels who are lying around the flames in the infernal regions beyond the fourteenth level. The just pass through them and enter Paradise (VisEz 58). These are the last monsters mentioned in the Latin vision and

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[616] This is the reading of manuscript L.

[617] L reads: *multa milia*, 'many thousands'.

[618] Mueller and Robbins translate: "they all exited a different color".

seem to be an echo of the two lions mentioned as the first kind in the beginning (here, too, the just pass through unharmed) and of the dogs, described immediately thereafter.

Comparison of these beasts with the monsters from EÍ gives rise to the following conclusions. All the beasts mentioned in the preceding paragraph are divine punishments; only the dogs in VisEz are a sanction for a Sunday transgression (1). They can all be found in Hell (2). None of them are referred to by the number five (3); the beasts from GrApcEz are numbered four and are named by the Greek equivalent for *bestiae*. SibOr also mentions beasts, but they are 'many'. The worm in VisEz is huge (4) and the beasts in SibOr are horrible (5). There are no parallels for the sixth and seventh aspects. In short: these monsters share some aspects, but these are general similarities and are not really valid as sources for the five monsters in EÍ.

A huge monster connected with Hell is found in *III Baruch*. Baruch, the scribe of the prophet Jeremiah, is shown the mysteries of Five Heavens by an angel. In the Third Heaven he sees a plain and a serpent who appears to be stone (Greek)/a serpent on a stone mountain (Slavonic[619]). The Greek and Slavonic texts give different details. In the Greek text the angel shows Hades, which looks gloomy and unclean. Baruch wants to know the identity or the meaning of this dragon and the cruel something which is around it[620]. The angel answers that the dragon eats the bodies of those who have lived badly and is nourished by them. He goes on to explain that this is Hades, which is like the serpent in that Hades also drinks one cubit from the sea. The sea does not diminish because it is fed by 360 rivers, three of which are named (III Greek Bar 4:3-7). This text

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[619] The translator notes that the text is corrupt here. The sentence about the stone (mountain) might be emended into "two hundred plethra in length" (Gaylord in Charlesworth, 1983, p. 666, n. d).

[620] The text reads here: "Τίς ἐστιν ὁ δράκων οὗτος, καὶ τίς ὁ περὶ αὐτὸν ἀπηνής" (James, 1897, p. 86). This is translated by Gaylord (in Charlesworth, 1983, p. 667) as follows: "What is this dragon and this monster around it?" This translation gives the impression that there is another monster present. The word ἀπηνής, however, is an adjective and means 'ungentle, rough, hard, cruel'. Perhaps it refers to the gloomy and unclean appearance of Hades referred to in III Bar 4:3. James (1897, p. lxi) remarks about this sentence: "Of Baruch's Hades, as I said, it is impossible to get any clear notion. The words τίς ὁ περὶ αὐτὸν ἀπηνής may give a clue, if we may take them to be corrupt and think of the dragon as encircling Hades, and not of Hades as encircling the dragon". Another possibility might be the serpent/dragon lying in the sea/Hades (which makes the serpent surrounded by 'something cruel, ungentle'), which surrounds the earth and here apparently the Heavens too. (Cp. also Asen 12:11: Aseneth is afraid to be thrown into the deep of the sea and to be swallowed by the large sea monster that has existed since eternity, and other texts mentioned above dealing with related ideas.) A problem with this interpretation arises when we read on and find in III Bar 5 that serpent and Hades are identical. It could be that this confusion is caused by the fact that these entities — Hades, the sea and a monster — are symbolically interrelated but this interrelation is difficult to envisage.

makes more sense when read together with the Slavonic version. According to III Slavonic Bar, every day the serpent drinks one cubit of water from the sea and eats earth as if it were grass. The angel explains that 353 and/or 354 rivers flow into the sea (nine rivers are named), which is why the sea does not diminish. Moreover, it does not diminish[621] because its heart is enflamed (III Slavonic Bar 4:3-5). There is more information somewhat further (III Bar 5:2-3): Baruch wants to know how large is the belly of the serpent that drinks one cubit from the sea (the Slavonic version adds: every day). The angel gives a different answer in the two versions: in the Greek text he says that its belly is Hades and in the Slavonic version its belly is as large as Hades. The Greek version adds that its belly is as great as the distance that 300 men can throw a weight.

Only in the Greek version is there a direct connection between the serpent and Hades, which is why I focus upon this text. The beast is a divine punishment (1) as it eats the sinners. It may be surrounded by Hell or it is Hell itself (2). The monster — of which there is only one and not five — is not designated by a Greek equivalent of *bestia*, but by words meaning serpent and dragon (3). The beast is huge (4) and, if it is the same as Hades, then it is gloomy and unclean (5). There are no parallels with the sixth and seventh aspects of the monsters from EÍ. Huge beasts symbolising the Realm of Death/Hell were already referred to in 2.3.2.1: the fish in whose belly Jonah dwelled (Ion 2:3-4, 6-7; Mt 12:40) and Jasconius (in NBA); and, furthermore, in 3.3.2.2 the Underworld was offered as a possible interpretation of the beast like a sea monster from *Pastor Hermae* (see note 542). *III Baruch* thus gives a similar image, but — as mentioned in 3.3.2.1 — this book does not seem to have exerted much influence in the West, although it may have influenced ApcPa, in its turn highly relevant to the Sunday traditions.

In ApcAb the sinners will be food for the fire of Hades, soaring in the air of the underworld regions of the uttermost depths and contents of a wormy belly (ApcAb 31:3). They will putrefy in the belly of the crafty worm Azazel and be burned by the fire of Azazel's tongue (ApcAb 31:5). Here we have another example of the Underworld as the belly of a huge worm, which is the devil called Azazel. This text cannot have been of direct influence on EÍ as it was unknown in the West (R. Rubinkiewicz in Charlesworth, 1983, p. 686). It may, however, have influenced other texts that were known in the West. It was originally written in Hebrew in Palestine (*ibid.*, pp. 682-3).

There are two relevant sections in *Acta S. Thomae Apostoli*, 'The Acts of the holy Apostle Thomas' (ATh; edition of the Greek text: Bonnet, 1903/59, pp. 99-291; translation into English: James, 1924/89, pp. 365-438; into German: Han J.W. Drijvers in Schneemelcher, 1904/89, pp. 303-67). The original Syriac text written at the beginning of the third century is lost; its Greek translation and a later Syriac version are extant

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[621] The translator notes that the sense here requires "does not increase" (Gaylord in Charlesworth, 1983, p. 666, n. k).

(*ibid.*, p. 290). There are, moreover, translations in quite a few other languages, Latin among them (*ibid.*, p. 291). There is reason to believe that ATh were known in Ireland in their entirety (see McNamara, 1975, pp. 118-9). The first relevant episode is from the Third Act: it deals with a large serpent or dragon that has killed a man (§31). The serpent reveals its identity to Thomas (§32). The beast delivers a long speech in which it becomes clear that it has close connections with the Devil: it seems to be a son of Satan. Of special interest are the following points: the serpent tells that it is the son of "him that girdeth about the sphere: and I am kin to him that is outside the ocean, whose tail is set in his own mouth" (James, 1924/89, p. 379) and also: "I am he that inhabiteth and holdeth the deep of hell (Tartarus)" (*ibid.*, p. 380). The image that is created here is that the Devil surrounds the earth and another (?) relative of the dragon lies around the ocean (that surrounds the earth) and has its tail in its mouth. This latter image has also been connected with Leviathan, as noted above (1.3.2, 2.3.2.1 and 3.3.2.1, note 423). The dragon that is the Devil's son both lives in and encloses Hell: this seems to be a parallel of the difficult text of III Bar, described above. This text is also complex, since the serpent dies and is swallowed by the earth (§33). I will leave this difficult text as it is; for this study it suffices to conclude that it, too, contains the ideas encountered earlier of a beast lying in the world ocean and a beast living in and surrounding Hell. It is clear from the serpent's speech that the beasts mentioned here lead people to sin; the idea of punishment (1) may be referred to in the remark about the link with Tartarus. The dragon lives in (and encloses) Hell (2), but it is a single beast and not five (3), although some of its relatives are also mentioned. Obviously, the beast is large (4) and horrible (5), although the latter is not stated explicitly. There are no parallels for aspects 6 and 7.

The other relevant passage also deals with Hell and is found in the Sixth Act. A young man tells the apostle about a horrible deed he has done (§51): he has killed the woman he loves because he wanted her to become his 'consort in chastity and pure conversation', but she had other ideas about love. He could not bear the thought that she would share physical love with another man, which is why he murdered her. The apostle is outraged by this act (§52). They go to the corpse of the girl (§53), and she is raised from the dead (§54) and asked to tell about the fearful, cruel place where she has been. She describes the many torments she has witnessed (§§55-7). The sinners are punished in a way commensurate with their sins; James adds here, in a footnote (1924/89, p. 390), that the description of the torments is largely derived from ApcPe. Beasts, however, are mentioned in only one place: the souls of women who had sex with men other than their husbands are gnashing their teeth in a pit full of mire and worms (§56). Here is another divine punishment (1) meted out in Hell (2) by worms; they are neither called beasts nor five in number, nor are they large or explicitly said to be horrible, nor do they want to leave Hell, nor are they restrained by God's mercy. The similarity between these worms and the five beasts of Hell in EÍ is, therefore, too faint to connect them with each other.

Most of the beasts that serve as a divine punishment in ApcPe have already been described. I refer to 3.3.2.4 for the descriptions of the creeping/venomous beasts and the worms in Gr. §25/Eth. §7 and the carnivorous beasts in the fragment of Clemens of Alexandria and Eth. §8. There is, furthermore, the punishment of people who have persecuted and betrayed the just (Gr. §27/Eth. §9). They are standing up to their middle in flames in a dark place (Eth.: the Hell of men), while evil spirits (Eth.: a spirit of wrath) scourge them and worms that do not rest (Eth.: a worm that does not sleep) devour their entrails. (This is probably another variant version of the fire and the worm from Is 66:24.) Finally, the Ethiopic text (§11) describes people who did not obey their parents or honour older people. They are hanging up and flesh-devouring birds (mentioned above, in note 577) are inflicting a multitude of wounds upon them.

If we compare these beasts with the five monsters from EÍ we may conclude the following: they are all divine punishments (1), but not for transgressing the Sunday commandment. They all inhabit Hell (2). Two kinds are named by a Greek equivalent of *bestia*: the creeping/venomous beasts and the carnivorous beasts. However, they were connected with serpents in 3.3.2.4. Nowhere is the number five found (3). None of them is called large (4); the carnivorous beasts are even small. The creeping/venomous beasts are 'evil'; the worms that are in their company are 'like clouds of darkness'; the word 'horrible' is not used (5). There are no similarities with the 6th and 7th aspects. In short: there is some parallelism between these beasts and the Irish monsters from Hell, but this is far too general for any connection to be established.

ApcPa gives mainly worms as divine punishment. A man stands up to his knees in a river of fire; his hands are bloody; worms come from his mouth and nostrils and he begs for mercy. This is a deacon who ate the offerings, committed fornication and did things which were not right in God's eyes (§36). In the midst of a multitude of pits is a river full of men and women who are being devoured by worms. They are usurers who trusted in their riches instead of in God (§37). ApcPa §39 describes how, in a place of ice and snow, naked feetless and handless men and women are devoured by worms. They harmed the orphans, widows and poor and they did not trust in the Lord. The infanticides from §40 who are on a spit of fire while beasts are tearing them are already described in 3.3.2.4. They are not even allowed to beg for mercy. In §40 there is also a punishment involving dragons. The punishment and sin are the following: men and women in fiery rags have dragons twined about their necks, shoulders and feet. They are tortured by angels with fiery horns. They seemed to be God's just servants during life but were in fact merciless towards widows, orphans, strangers, pilgrims and neighbours. Moreover, ApcPa §42 describes how St Paul sees the restless worm[622]. The worms measure one

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[622] In this sentence, the Latin gives a singular form: "*uermem inquietum*", but from the next sentence it follows that worms in plural are meant: "*uermes*" (James, 1893, p. 34). However, the St. Gallen text of ApcPa reads here: "*uermis*

cubit and have two heads. In this place of cold and snow the people are
gnashing their teeth. They are the ones who denied the Resurrection of
Christ and the General Resurrection. Finally, in §44 the sinners in Hell
mention 'the worms which are under us', but here it is not a specific but a
general hellish punishment.

Comparison of these beasts with the five EÍ monsters results in the
following: they are a divine punishment (1) in Hell (2), but not for a
Sunday transgression. Only the first kind of monster in §40 is called
bestiae, but there are not five of them. Moreover, they have been con-
nected with the serpents. None of them is explicitly said to be large (4) or
horrible (5). They are neither eager to leave Hell (6), nor are they con-
strained by God's mercy (7). Remarkable in §40 is that the infanticides are
not allowed to beg for mercy, whereas the sinful deacon in §36 is
described as doing this. The same is true of these beasts, as was concluded
in the case of ApcPe: there is some similarity, but it is far too general for
us to draw conclusions about some direct relation.

Red. VI of ApcPa §9 is the only section that describes beasts in Hell.
This is the punishment involving a copper nag, copper beasts of burden
and other four-footed animals, which was shown in 3.3.2.3 to be related to
the fiery horse — the other hellish beast from EÍ. There is no connection
with the· five monsters, only the general similarity of being a hellish (2)
divine punishment (1).

Red. XI of ApcPa gives two punishments involving beasts. One of
them has been described in 3.3.2.4: the five nuns tormented by five
serpents, five vipers and (fiery) birds (§11). This punishment seems to be
part of the cluster of sins and punishments connected with the serpents. If
one compares this group of beasts with the five EÍ monsters, one can
conclude that both are a divine punishment (1) in Hell (2). These beasts in
Red. XI of ApcPa are not designated *bestiae*, but both serpents and vipers
are five in number (3). This should probably be explained as one beast per
nun. The aspects 4 to 7 have no parallel: the voice of the nuns is not even
heard by the Deity (7).

The other punishment is new (§4). St Paul sees many fiery trees
around a river of fire:

"Uidi bestias   I saw beasts
in medio aque maris   in the middle of the water of the sea
quasi pisces   as if it were fish
in medio maris"   in the middle of a sea
(Dwyer, 1988, p. 126).

In §5 it is described how people are standing in the fiery river[623],

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mensuram cubitum unum et capita dua" (Silverstein, 1935, p. 145).
[623] Dwyer (1988, p. 122) is of the opinion that the river with beasts (§4) is the
same as the river in which the souls stand immersed (§5). Wright (1993, p. 125,
n. 74) disagrees, pointing out that the river in §4 is not within Hell but located

immersed to different levels: their knees, navels, lips or hair. Their sins are described, but nothing is said about what the beasts do. This episode occurs in other redactions too: I adduce these versions now because they may elucidate this difficult text that seems to lack certain details.

Red. IV describes this episode more extensively than the others:

"Postea vidit flumen orribile,   "Afterwards he saw a horrible river,
in quo multe bestie dyabolice erant   in which were many demonic beasts
quasi pisces in medio maris,   like fish in the middle of the sea,
que animas peccatrices devorant   who devour the sinful souls
sine ulla misericordia   without any mercy
quasi lupi devorant oves.   as wolves devour sheep.
Et desuper illud flumen est pons,   And above that river is a bridge,
per quem transeunt anime iuste   which just souls cross
sine ulla dubitacione, et   without any hesitation, and
multe peccatrices anime merguntur   many sinful souls sink,
unaqueque secundum meritum suum. each according to its deserts.
Ibi sunt multi bestie dyabolice (...)"   There are many demonic beasts (...)"
(Brandes, 1885, p. 76)   (Wright, 1993, p. 122, n. 66).

The other versions that describe this punishment are Red. V (Silverstein,

somewhere vague. Moreover, he says that no other redaction combines the two rivers. The first reason might be true, although one might argue that this version is not exactly clear in its formulations, as is shown in this instance. His second observation is definitely incorrect. Red. IV (Brandes, 1885, p. 76) describes a horrible river with many diabolical beasts in the river and a bridge across it. Immediately after the bridge episode St Paul sees many souls immersed to different levels. The river is not explicitly mentioned but this fact makes it all the more probable that the same river is meant. In Red. V (Silverstein, 1935, p. 198) the horrible river with beasts is described. Then it is said that all souls, the just and the sinners, have to walk over a bridge across that river. The text does not relate what happens with those who walk the bridge, but refers instead to St Paul seeing there people immersed to different levels in that river (*"in flumine isto"*). Red. VIII is somewhat different: the bridge is across a large river of water, which in this version is the same as the river "Occeanus" that encircles the world (Silverstein, 1935, p. 208). The river of fire in which people are immersed to different levels is present in this text as well (*ibid.*, p. 210). Red. IX (*id.*, 1959, pp. 239-40) describes the horrible, putrid river with the beasts and the bridge across the river (§4). Later (§6) the text speaks about people immersed to different levels in that river (*"in illo flumine"*). No other river is referred to in the meantime, so only one river càn be meant in this version. Red. X (*ibid.*, pp. 244-5) first mentions the fiery river (§2), then refers to the horrible river with the bridge and the beasts (§3b), and the scene of the people immersed to different levels in the fiery river comes later (§5). Many redactions mention in this context — usually between the two scenes about the river — the Dragon/Demon of Hell (see below, *sub* Old and Middle Irish texts).

1935, p. 198[624]); Red. IX §4 (Silverstein, 1959, p. 239); and Red. X §3b
(*ibid.*, p. 244). The following variations are noteworthy: Red. XI described
the river as fiery; in the other four the river is horrible, to which Red. IX
adds 'rotten, decayed' ("*putridum*"). Red. XI qualifies the river water as
sea water by *in medio aque maris*; Red. IV, V and X just give *in quo*, 'in
which'. Red. IX compares the river with a large sea ("*velud mare
largum*"); this comparison could explain the sea water mentioned in Red.
XI. Red. XI refers to the monsters simply as 'beasts'; Redactions IV, V
and X call them 'many diabolical beasts'; Red. IX speaks of 'many
swimming beasts'. The description in Red. XI ends with the comparison
with fish in the middle of a sea, which is exactly the same as in versions
IV and X; V does not have this comparison and IX leaves out 'in the
middle'.

The other Redactions relate what the beasts do: in IV and X they
devour the sinful souls; in V they consume and devour souls at all times;
and in IX they devour the sinful souls and tear them to pieces. Redactions
IV, V and X conclude the characterisation by saying that this happens
without any mercy, as wolves devour sheep. Red. IX is completely
different here. It says that this happens to sinful souls who have not done
penance in this world. Red. IX, moreover, offers the detail that the bridge
is narrow and quivering as a very thin hair. From the comparison with
fish/sea and wolves/sheep, one might conclude on the actions of the beasts
that they swim around in the river and devour souls.

The idea of a dangerous bridge, sometimes compared with a sword or
a hair, which can be crossed by good but not by bad souls can also be
found in other religions[625]. None of the Redactions described here actual-
ly says that the souls fall off the bridge, but the images used (the crossing
of the bridge, the souls immersed in the river, the devouring by the beasts)
imply it.

Red. XI is thus related to the other versions and, although this is not
wholly sound methodologically, I will now compare these beasts with the
five beasts from EÍ using details from these five versions. The beasts are a
divine punishment (1) in Hell (2) designated *bestiae*, and there are many of
them; not five (3). The beasts are not said to be large (4), but they are

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[624] Redaction VIII (Silverstein, 1935, p. 208) does not refer to beasts in the bridge
episode. Dwyer (1988, p. 135) omits Red. V in his discussion of this episode.
[625] See Widengren (1969, pp. 169, 441-2, 451-2) who mentions examples from
Iran, India, the Syrian Church Father Ephraem, rabbinic Jewish ideas, and Islam.
According to Silverstein (1935, pp. 78-9; 1959, pp. 220-1), the bridge motif
should be traced to chapter 36 in the Fourth Book of the *Dialogues* by Gregory
the Great, but Wright (1993, pp. 122-3, n. 67) refers to a study which makes his
proof less decisive. (See *ibid.*, p. 123, n. 68 for more studies of the bridge motif.
For the bridge motif with a different symbolical meaning in early Christian and
Islamic texts, see Baarda, 1983, pp. 187-97.) In six manuscripts of VisEz the
motif is found in verse 36. The bridge crosses a fiery stream and is broad when
the just pass, but becomes fragile like a string of thread when the sinners appro-
ach. The sinners then fall into the river.

horrible because they are diabolical (5). The sixth and seventh aspects are absent: the beasts devour the souls without any mercy and are not held back.

In the Ethiopic version of ApcVirg (see 3.3.2.4) fiery serpents, dogs, lions and panthers torment nuns and probably their partners too. The beasts mentioned here are variant versions of divine punishments (1) in Hell (2); there is no further relation with the five monsters from EÍ.

Not one of the non-canonical texts is therefore a convincing source for the five hellish monsters from EÍ. There are many beasts serving as a divine punishment (1), but only the dogs in VisEz are a sanction for a Sunday transgression. The monsters described above live in Hell (2). Some are called *bestiae* or by a Greek equivalent of that word — the beasts in SibOr, the creeping/venomous and the carnivorous beasts in ApcPe; their parallels in ApcPa and the beasts in ApcPa Red. XI — but none of them occur as a group of five (3). Only the serpents and vipers in Red. XI are five in number, but this is connected with the fact that they torment five nuns. The worm from VisEz and ApcAb, the dragon from III Bar and ATh are large (4), but they occur singly. The many beasts in SibOr are horrible; the dragon in III Bar is gloomy and unclean; the creeping/venomous beasts in ApcPe are evil and the beasts in ApcPa Red. XI are perhaps diabolical (5). None of the texts gives a parallel of the motif of monsters wanting to leave Hell (6) but being restrained by God's mercy (7).

Isidore describes the lower regions and explains the names Gehenna, Tartarus, etc. in *Etymologiae* XIV.9. He does not, however, refer to any beasts living there.

In the versions of the **Latin Letter** several kinds of beast occur and they all serve as a divine punishment for the transgression of Sunday rules (and sometimes for other sins as well). Many of them have been described in the preceding sections: the locusts with and without wings (in Ta, L1, M2, Tou, and V) in 3.3.2.1 and 3.3.2.2; the Saracen horses (in M2 and Tou) in 3.3.2.3; and the (winged) serpents (in Ta, L1, P, M2, Tou and V) in 3.3.2.4. I will now advert to the other beasts mentioned in these letters.

A first class of bestial punishment are small beasts which are noxious to the fields. They occur in M2 and Tou among the following series of earlier mentioned punishments: wingless locusts, serpents, mice (*mures*; M2) or snails (*murices*; Tou) and locusts. Tou adds to this 'all kinds of evil thing' (*omnia mala*). As M2 and Tou are quite similar, it may very well be that originally one and the same punishment was meant here and that a scribal error is the cause for two different words (cp. also the spelling *bruscos* for *brucos* in Tou). In any case, these beasts are not from Hell (2), nor are they called *bestiae*, nor five in number (3), nor large (4), nor explicitly called horrible (5): one could characterise them as the natural enemies of rural life. They are not connected with the five monsters from EÍ, which is also true of other small, noxious beasts: the *scyniphes* (P; see 3.3.2.1).

Other animals that are likewise natural enemies of rural life can be

found too: wolves, dogs and wild beasts. Ta refers to rapacious wolves that will devour 'you' because 'you' do not keep Sunday holy. L1 has the winged serpents accompanied by dark dogs. According to M2, vicious wild beasts (*ferae pessimae*) will devour 'your' children and so will ferocious beasts (*bestiae*), wolves and many other beasts[626]. Tou also threatens with vicious wild beasts (*ferae pessimae*), beasts (*bestiae*) and wolves that will eat 'your' children. V refers to rapacious wolves and wicked dogs which will eat 'you'. These beasts seem to be normal wild animals, although they are sent by the Divine.

Some of the wolves, however, are characterised by an extraordinary act. Because 'you' do not observe Sunday, says M1, rapacious wolves and mists (*caligines*) will spread (*pullulant*) over 'you', and will submerge 'you' in the depths of the sea (*in profundum maris*). In To the threat is that rapacious wolves will come over 'you' and submerge 'you' in the depths of the sea. H says that because 'you' neither observe Sunday nor fast on Friday rapacious wolves will howl[627] over 'you': they will carry 'you' off and submerge 'you' in the depths of the sea. L2 tells that rapacious wolves and wicked dogs will come over 'you' and submerge 'you' in the depths of the sea[628]. These wolves (and dogs in the last case) are the only beasts mentioned in M1, To, H and L2. As I said above, the depths of the sea have a connection with Hell and can be a synonym for Hell. If this is meant then the wolves (and dogs) share an aspect with the five monsters that the other wild beasts do not. That they are rapacious (and wicked) could perhaps be seen as a parallel of being horrible (5), but there are no traces of the other characteristics: they are neither large (4), nor restrained by God's mercy (7) from their eagerness to go to the earth (6). Therefore, as the other wild beasts mentioned in the Latin Letters, these wolves (and dogs) also seem to have no direct connections with the five hellish beasts.

Another category is formed by worms. Ta mentions a punishment in the month of November which will bring great fear upon 'you': worm, fire and flame, with the worm eating some and the fire burning others. This seems to be a variant version of the fire and the worm from Is 66:24. In that case a divine punishment for not observing Sunday (1) in Hell (2) is involved, but this is all 'the worm' has in common with the five beasts. In P this biblical quotation is even more obvious: sinners descend to Hell, where their worm will not die and the fire will not be extinguished. The sin connected with this, however, is that of swearing by the cross. V mentions worms twice: first, they are sent together with hail and they will eat 'your' fruit of the fields. Second, in November the greatest divine wrath will come over 'you', along with a flame of burning fire and flying worms (*vermes volantes*). Therefore, the first kind seems to belong to the small beasts such as the locusts that destroy the crops. The second plague

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[626] "*Multas alias bestias*" is omitted in manuscript traditions W and E.

[627] The text reads *ullulant*, but perhaps *pullulant* (M1's reading) is meant.

[628] These are the beasts mentioned in the appendix to ApcPa Red. IIIb (see 3.3.2.3).

seems to be an apocalyptic punishment, as was also found in Ta (and in other versions of the Latin Letter; see also below) and comparable with the punishment in EÍ §13. The fire and flying worms seem to have their roots in the fire and the worm from Is 66:24. In short: the worms are of no help in tracing the origin of the five hellish monsters.

The last group of monsters to be treated here is the most interesting kind in this context. These monsters are called *bestiae* and they are accompanied by apocalyptic phenomena. In M2 Jesus Christ swears by his holy angels and his archangels that because 'you' do not observe his holy Sunday he will send beasts (*bestiae*) that 'you' have never seen before and fowls (*volatilia*[629]). He will turn the light of the sun into darkness and one will kill the other because of his Holy Sunday. He will turn his face away from 'you'. There will be loud wailing and a turbulent sound (*vox turbida*). He will make 'your' souls dry with the fire that has no end. Terrible peoples will destroy the lands. Somewhat further in the text the threat occurs which was already referred to in 3.3.2.4: if 'you' neither do penance nor observe Sunday, Jesus Christ will open his Heavens and send a rain of fiery stones which will burn all the people. Moreover, he will send a beast/beasts with two heads, which 'you' have never seen before and which will eat the breasts of women. The day will be turned into darkness; people will kill each other because of Sunday. If there is no penance, then the divine wrath will come in the middle of September. This last kind of beast is of a composite character: it performs the same act as the (winged) serpents in the Latin Letters. The two heads are also ascribed to a worm in ApcPa §42, which is the restless worm in Hell. As in the case of the beasts in M2, mentioned above, people have never seen this kind of beast before and its coming is accompanied by apocalyptic or eschatological phenomena.

There are two more Latin Letters in which this type of beast is found. The first is Tou, which is again very similar to M2. If you do not observe my Holy Sunday, writes Jesus Christ, I swear to you that I will have to send over you beasts which you have never seen before and fowls. Again the threats are uttered of sunlight changing into darkness, the killing of each other because of the non-observance of Sunday, the turning away of Christ's face, the loud wailing, a turbulent night[630], the destruction of souls in the endless fire and the invasion of terrible, destructive peoples.

These beasts from M2 and Tou share the following aspects with the five monsters from EÍ: they are a divine punishment for Sunday transgressions (1). They have never been seen before. This might mean that they are not terrestrial but infernal beasts (2), as Hell is usually not visited by living people unless they see it in a vision. Remarkable in this context is the beast with two heads, which is like the worm St Paul saw in Hell. They are designated *bestiae*, but not five in number (3). The other four

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[629] The beasts and fowls are omitted in manuscript E.

[630] The manuscript reads here *nos* which has been emended into *nox* by the editor; M2 reads: *vox*.

aspects are absent.

There is one last text that throws some light on these beasts. They also occur in the Latin Sunday Letter of Abbot Eustace (see 3.3.2.4). As in M2, two kinds of *bestia* are described in this Letter and here too the second kind eat women's breasts. This latter kind is called 'worse beasts'. No further details are added by the text. This monster kind should probably be placed in the same group as the (winged) serpents.

The first kind is described as follows:

"mittam vobis bestias habentes
capita leonum, capillos mulierum,
caudas camelorum,
et ita erunt famelicae,
quod carnes vestras devorabunt,
et vos desiderabitis fugere
ad sepulcrum mortuorum
et abscondere vos propter metum
bestiarum
et tollam lumen solis
ab oculis vestris
et mittam super vos tenebras,
ut occidatis vos invicem
non videntes
et auferam a vobis faciem Meam
et non faciam vobiscum
misericordiam"
(Röhricht, 1890, p. 439).

I will send to you beasts with
lions' heads, women's hair,
camels' tails,
and they will be so hungry
that they will devour your flesh
and you will desire to flee
to the graves of the dead
and to hide yourselves out of fear
of the beasts
and I will take away the sunlight
from your eyes
and send darkness over you
so that you will kill each other,
not seeing a thing
and I will turn away My face from
you and I will not have mercy on
you

These beasts are quite similar to the locusts from Hell in Apc 9, quoted in 3.3.2.2. The elements from the three texts are listed below, in figure 6:

Figure 6

Apc	EÍ	Eustace's Sunday Letter
locusts	beasts	beasts
come on earth	desire to go to earth	threat of their coming
from the Abyss	from the depths of Hell	
to punish people	to punish people	to punish people
for five months	there are five beasts	
lions' teeth		lions' heads
women's hair		women's hair
scorpions' tails		camels' tails
stinging humans		eating human flesh
wish to die (in vain)		wish to flee to the dead and hide
sunlight turns into darkness		sunlight turns into darkness
no mercy for some people (without God's sign)	divine mercy stops beasts	no divine mercy for some people (Sunday transgressors)

As is now obvious, some parallels exist between these three texts. There may, moreover, be connections between the other two Sunday Letters and the Apc: M2 mentions a turbulent sound and Apc 9:9 refers to the sound the wings of the locusts make. M2 and Tou both give the threat of destructive peoples; in Apc 9:16-19 the destruction caused by the armies of the supernatural horsemen is announced[631].

This last apocalyptic kind of beast in the Latin Letters is, therefore, closest to the five monsters in EÍ: they are a divine punishment for Sunday transgressions (1). They may come from Hell (2) which is indicated by the fact that they have never been seen before and that could be deduced from the Sunday Letter of Eustace. According to that source, they are the locusts from the Abyss, which will come at the End of Time. Until then

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[631] The image of night, noise, darkness and confusion, which cause people to flee and to kill each other, bears resemblance to the trick of Gideon and his army, described in Idc 7. In this chapter, foreign enemies (from the East) are compared with hordes of locusts and their camels are as innumerable as the sand on the sea shore (Idc 7:12).

God's mercy (7) keeps them back, but when they come, there will be no
mercy for the sinners. They are designated *bestiae*, but they are not five in
number (3). It is not said that they are huge (4) and horrible (5), but from
their descriptions one could argue that they are. Their eagerness to leave
Hell and visit earth (6) is not touched upon. The other monsters mentioned
in the Latin Letters are representatives of natural enemies of rural life,
both small and large. An infernal aspect may characterise the wolves (and
dogs) that will submerge people in the deep of the sea, and the worms that
will torment people in Hell. The latter are a variant version of the biblical
worms.

AP is the oldest among the **Hiberno-Latin texts** that will be treated now.
Stanza D refers to the large dragon who is the same as the serpent (see
also note 23). The stanza obviously goes back to Apc 12:9, where the
great dragon with seven heads is equated with the old serpent from *Gen-
esis*, the Devil and Satan. The stanza says that this dragon drew a third
part of the stars into the Abyss of infernal places and divers prisons (*"in
barathrum locorum infernalium diuersorumque carcerum"*; Bernard,
Atkinson, 1898, I, p. 69). In Apc 12:4 the dragon does this with its tail,
but instead of into Hell, the stars are thrown to the earth. The reference to
the Abyss in AP may imply that the dragon is located there too (2). It is
not called *bestia* and there is only one dragon (3). The beast is called large
(*magnus*; 4), the most wicked one, and terrible (*deterrimus, terribilis*; 5).
In the Apc the dragon is restrained and set a certain time by God (for
instance, Apc 12:12) but there is no trace of this in the stanza. Therefore,
the last two characteristics are absent. The poem not only refers to the
Devil as a dragon but also mentions the name Lucifer (stanza C): the angel
who falls through pride together with other apostate angels. The second fall
of the Devil (*zabulus*, and in some manuscripts: *diabolus*) with his attend-
ants (*"satilites"*, from *satelles*, 'attendant') is referred to in stanzas G and
H. The poem gives a description of Hell in stanza N. Hell (called *infernus*
and *Gehenna*) is in the nethermost regions; its horrors are enumerated.
Among them are worms (*vermes*) and fearsome beasts (*dirae bestiae*).
They are thus the general hellish inhabitants and cannot be directly related
to the five beasts.

As said above, Jasconius in NBA can be interpreted as a symbol for
the Underworld/Death/Hell, but is not directly connected with the five Eí
beasts. Jasconius is a huge and fearsome beast, but neither serves as a
punishment nor lives in Hell. There are some episodes in NBA, however,
that give some interesting parallels to motifs dealt with in this chapter:
designations of the Devil and the motif of respite from infernal torments.
The Devil is called Satan in §6, where St Brendan warns of his tempta-
tions. Despite this warning, one of the brothers steals something and turns
out to be possessed by a devil in the shape of an Ethiopian child (§6) or a
small Ethiopian (§7). This motif of 'racial colouring' of devils was also
noted above (3.3.2.1), where a devil has the shape of a huge Ethiopian in
PP. Another reference to the Devil is given in §11, where he is called the
Ancient Enemy. A bird tells St Brendan how it and other birds survived

the great destruction of the Ancient Enemy (*"magna ruina antiqui hostis"*; Selmer, 1959/89, p. 24). The fall of this Enemy and his attendants has also brought about the ruin of the bird and its companions: they travel around the earth as spirits but on Sundays and holy days they receive the bodies of birds. The text reads here: "*Sed ubi fuimus creati, per lapsum illius cum suis satellitibus contigit et nostra ruina*" (*ibid.*), which is translated by O'Meara: "When we were created, Lucifer's fall and that of his followers brought about our destruction also" (1976/85, p. 21). This translation is misleading: NBA does not give 'Lucifer' as the name of the Prince of the demons but mentions another name in the parts that describe the adventures of St Brendan and his brothers in the confines of Hell. A conversation with a supernatural bird also occurs in ICUC (see 3.3.2.3) and, as in ICUC, the ocean is the setting of the infernal scene in NBA as well. Brendan and his monks see a high smoky mountain (§24) in the northern part of the ocean. One brother ends up on this island and catches flame when he is among a multitude of demons. The other brothers in the boat beg the Lord for mercy. Then the mountain seems to be totally aflame while it exhales and inhales flames. After seven days' sailing (§25) they see a man on a rock who identifies himself as Judas. Thanks to the mercy of Jesus Christ he is free from Hell and its torments on Sundays and other holy days. Here is thus another instance of the Sunday respite from Hell. Usually Judas burns in the centre of the mountain where he is eaten by demons. Judas gives the name of the Prince of the demons, and in his description of the fiery mountain he also personifies Hell:

"Ibi est Leuiathan cum suis satellitibus.
Ibi fui quando deglutiuit fratrem uestrum,
et ideo erat infernus letus
ut emisisset foras flammas ingentes,
et sic facit semper quando animas impiorum deuorat"
(Selmer, 1959/89, p. 67)

"Leviathan and his attendants are there.
I was there when he swallowed your brother.
Hell was so joyful
that it sent forth mighty flames —
as it always does when it devours the souls of the impious"
(O'Meara, 1976/85, p. 57).

From the formulation 'and his attendants', which was also used in the episode of the Ancient Enemy, one can conclude that the author of NBA refers to the Devil by the name of the primeval sea monster Leviathan. The Devil is here said to swallow souls, an image that also occurs in FA (see below). At the same time, Hell is said to devour impious souls. These ideas of Hell and the Devil swallowing souls and thus appearing as a kind of monster will receive more attention below, *sub* Old and Middle Irish texts. In the continuation of the story about Judas, who may spend another night outside Hell thanks to St Brendan, the Devil is referred to as the Prince (*princeps*) of the demons. NBA refers also in other episodes to the special role of Sunday, but I leave this further aside.

The above-mentioned fragment of the lost 'Seven Heavens' apocryphon[632] found in a homily, which is said to be of Irish provenance (see note 610[633]), describes Hell[634]:

"Et angelum dimergit eum	And the angel submerges him
in infernum, ciuitas ferreas	in Hell: an iron city
& muros & muros ferreos igneos, et	and walls and fiery iron walls and
XII turres & XII dracones in	twelve towers and twelve dragons on
uno turres & XII penis	one tower[635] with twelve punish-
& XII flagellis ardentis"	ments and twelve fiery scourges
(De Bruyne, 1907, p. 323).	

The text, moreover, tells that the old dragon is in this 'city of tears'. Lions and dragons slay the impious and sinners for ever until Resurrection Day (*ibid.*, p. 324).

Lions and dragons that torment the sinners also occur in non-canonical texts, as described above. The old dragon seems to be the Devil. I will return to the motif of twelve dragons below. Here, it suffices to conclude that these inhabitants of Hell are either too general (the lions and dragons) or too specific (the twelve dragons and the old dragon) to connect them with the five monsters from Eĺ.

In conclusion: these Hiberno-Latin texts give no sources or variant versions of the five infernal beasts, but they do give a portrayal of the personification of moral evil. AP mentions the tradition from the Apc in which the old dragon/the subtle serpent throws stars from Heaven. This beast is obviously the Devil. AP also relates the tradition of the proud Archangel Lucifer (for more about this, see below) who falls (twice) with his attendants. NBA names the Prince of the demons 'Leviathan' and makes both Leviathan and Hell swallow souls. There is no description of the appearance of 'Leviathan'; one cannot, therefore, conclude that the Devil is here portrayed as a monster, although the swallowing of souls is a monstrous characteristic. As was concluded in 2.3.2.1, the role of the sea

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[632] Jane Stevenson (1983) suggests a Coptic Gnostic background for some of the ideas found in the 'Seven Heavens' apocryphon.

[633] See also James (1924/89, pp. 480, 556) and Wright (1993, pp. 64-6).

[634] The text is full of mistakes and consists of corrupt Latin. For instance, the iron city should be given in the acc. sg.; the text gives *civitas* (nom. sg.) instead of *civitatem* (acc. sg.) and *ferreas* (acc. pl.) instead of *ferream* (acc. sg.). The angel who submerges the sinful soul in Hell should be given in the nom. (*angelus*) but is given in the acc. (*angelum*); *in uno turres* should be *in una turri*, etc.

[635] Wright (1993, p. 167, n. 208) expresses the opinion that the walls were originally twelve too. He translates: "twelve dragons on each tower". FA (see below) which also uses the 'Seven Heavens' apocryphon describes how the sinful soul is passed on by twelve dragons and ends up in the Devil's mouth. Because of this, I suggest that if this text gives a similar image then the dragons should be positioned vertically and thus they are on one tower. After having undergone their twelve punishments and scourges the soul lands in the iron city.

monster Leviathan is played by Jasconius in NBA. Finally, the old dragon in the (Hiberno?-)Latin homily is also probably the same as the Devil, which image should be traced to the Apc as well.

Some of the monsters in the **Old English homilies** which serve as a divine punishment for the transgression of Sunday observance have already been described: beetles (Homs. B and F) and gnats (Hom. F) in 3.3.2.1; grasshoppers (Homs. B and F) in 3.3.2.2; (flying) serpents (Homs. B, E, and F), serpents/worms and raging birds/fowls (in Hom. E.) in 3.3.2.4. These beasts do not come from Hell. In 3.3.2.4 a general hellish punishment is mentioned: the bites of serpents/worms (Hom. A), but since the text does not offer more details this punishment cannot be connected with the five beasts sanction.

Two sermons describe 'new' beasts. Hom. E. mentions raging wolves (*wulfas*) and raging dogs (*hundas*) that will eat 'your' bodies till death comes (Napier, 1883, p. 229, ll. 20-2[636]). The only aspect that these beasts share with the five monsters from Hell is that they are a divine punishment for the transgression of Sunday rules (1).

More interesting are the monsters given in Hom. B. It was already concluded above that this sermon is quite similar to EÍ insofar as these texts describe sanctions in which beasts figure. It not only offers parallels to the *brucha*, locusts and flying serpents, but also to the five beasts. Just as in the Irish Letter, these monsters are designated by a very general term: *déor*, 'beasts' (Napier, 1883, p. 221, l. 30). These beasts are found immediately after the section about beetles and grasshoppers. The sermon states that the Lord sent burning rains and sulphurous fire. When all the people almost perished, the Lord became sad about the imminent destruction of humanity. The Lord took the fire away and God's mercy was on the people. This section is then concluded by the above-mentioned sentence that this happened in Egypt (*ibid.*, ll. 21-8). The sermon goes on to say that the people observed Sunday for a short while but then started working again on this sacred day. In response to this, God punishes as follows: "*þa sænde dryhten .v. deor up of se*" (*ibid.*, l. 30), 'then the Lord sent five beasts up from the sea'. There is no literal equivalent of the aspects of being large (4) and horrible (5), but this might be implied in the sequal of this sentence: "*and nes ænig man, þæt hiom wiþstandan mihte*" (*ibid.*, ll. 30-1), 'and there was no-one who could withstand them'. Obviously, this has something in common with the sixth aspect — the people are the victims — but the eagerness of the five beasts to go to them is not referred to. Moreover, in Hom. B this threat has become a fact in the past. The seventh characteristic is present, but in a different shape and place. God's mercy is mentioned explicitly just before this episode, in connection with the fire from Heaven. When the five beasts are sent, the sermon relates,

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[636] This is comparable with the Latin Letter V, which also threatens with wolves and dogs that will devour people. The combination of wolves and dogs occurs in L2 too, but here they are said to submerge people in the depths of the sea.

the people almost perish again but then 'the Lord' takes them back (*ibid.*, ll. 31-3). This is, therefore, another instance of God's mercy. Here, the term is not used explicitly. The beasts are taken back, whereas in EÍ they are kept back.

The five monsters of EÍ can thus be found in Hom. B, albeit in a somewhat different version: they are part of the past. The monsters came from the sea (2) and punished the people because they did not observe Sunday (1). There are five beasts (3). God mercifully takes them back when they are about to destroy humankind (7).

More light is thrown on the five monsters by Priebsch. I will now advert to his findings and views. He bases his theory upon an Old English text and rules out the influence of the Latin Letters. In my view his suggestions about the Old English material are very valuable, but I do not believe that the Latin Letters should be excluded. I hope to have shown above that beasts in the Latin Letters M2, Tou and Eustace's copy of the Sunday Letter are eligible as variant versions of the beasts central here. I will now first describe Priebsch's suggestions about the Old English material and then connect these findings with the relevant monsters in the Latin Letters.

In the article in which Priebsch deals with the sources of EÍ, he expresses the opinion that the five horrible beasts are not part of the original set of ideas in the Latin Letter (1906-7, p. 146[637]). He bases this assertion upon his inability to find anything similar in either M1 — the version of the Latin Letter that he uses as an example of the source for EÍ and Hom. B — or in any other Latin Letter. Priebsch suggests that the motifs that EÍ and Hom. B share may be traceable to a Latin sermon based upon a Latin Letter (*ibid.*). Moreover, he refers to an Old English sermon (Wulfstan XLII: "*De temporibus Anticristi*", 'On the times of the Antichrist'; edition: Napier, 1883, pp. 191-205; Hom. G) that might elucidate the origin of the five beasts (Priebsch, 1906-7, p. 147).

This sermon, which uses the Apc extensively, deals with the Antichrist, announcing that his time is at hand. About halfway through the homily, the author refers to the *Apocalypse of John* (Napier, 1883, p. 199, ll. 14-5). A wild beast (*wilde deor*) is mentioned that rises from the Abyss (*neowelnys*) and will kill God's two witnesses Enoch and Elijah (*ibid.*, p. 199, ll. 16-20; cp. Apc 11:7). According to the sermon, this wild beast symbolises the Antichrist who will rage a little while, persecuting God's servants and favouring people with the beast's mark on their foreheads (*ibid.*, p. 199, l. 20 - p. 200, l. 4; cp. Apc 13:16-17). The false prophets[638] make an image of the beast which the people have to worship (*ibid.*, p. 200, ll. 4-7; cp. Apc 13:14-15). This is the first beast (*déor*)

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[637] Priebsch (1906-7, p. 146) concludes that "*diese Stellen nicht zum Gedankenbestand des 'Himmelsbriefes' gehören*".

[638] The Old English sermon speaks of false prophets in the plural, whereas the Apc mentions one false prophet who is the same as the beast that rises from the earth (Apc 13:11).

mentioned in the sermon but Priebsch referred to several beasts, which are now dealt with below.

When the beast/Antichrist rages, terrible great beasts (*egeslice mycele deor*) such as were never seen before until this time come up from Hell (*up of helle*; *ibid.*, p. 200, ll. 8-10). The beasts are armed as battle horses, have high helmets on their heads, cuirasses on their breasts, heads like human heads and tails like serpents (*wyrmas*) which the humans call scorpions. Their wings sound just like the noise of water and they have teeth like lions. They fly swiftly with a roaring like the grinding sound of chariots and they carry on their backs that accursed angel whom the people call Destroyer (*Awestend*). They proceed over the whole earth for five full months (*ibid.*, l. 10-20). The sermon continues describing the hellish army from Apc 9:16-19 and announces the final battle at Armageddon (*ibid.*, p. 200, l. 20 - p. 201, l. 5; cp. Apc 16:16), but the rest of the sermon can be left aside here.

Obviously the beasts of Hom. G are the monstrous locusts from Apc 9:1-11 described in 3.3.2.2, but there are some differences and additional details. I will now compare the two texts and point out the differences. Then I will connect a few of the additional details given by Hom. G with EÍ and relevant Latin Letters.

The Apc does not refer to the beasts by a general term but uses the specific designation *lucustae*; nor does it give equivalents of the adjectives 'horrible' and 'large' or say that the locusts have never been seen before (although this highly probable). The locusts come from the Abyss, an equivalent of Hell, and they are also compared with battle horses. Instead of high helmets, the locusts wear something like golden crowns. They also wear cuirasses, which are of iron (a detail absent in Hom. G). The locusts have human heads, like the beasts; they also have female hair, another detail absent in Hom. G. The beasts have serpents' tails, but then the homilist adds that humans call these scorpions, indicating the same kind of tail as in the Apc. The description of the sound the beasts make is some-what different: the wings of the locusts make a sound like battle chariots; the wings of the beasts make a noise like water[639] and they themselves roar like chariots. The beasts, moreover, fly fast, which is not said about the locusts. Both locusts and beasts have lions' teeth and are in the com-pany of the angel called 'Destroyer'; the phrase *super se* in the Apc has been taken quite literally in the Old English homily: the beasts carry the angel on their backs. Another similarity is that the locusts and the beasts will be on earth for five months. Hom. G does not say what the beasts will do. The appearance of the supernatural armies after the coming of the locusts/beasts is a final detail the two texts share.

Some of the details in Hom. G, which have no parallel in the Apc, can be found in EÍ: the *déor* are said to be *egeslic*, 'awful, dreadful, terrible, threatening', and *mycel*, 'great, intense, much, many'. This is equivalent to

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[639] The wings of the four creatures in the vision of the prophet Ezechiel also make the noise of many waters (Ez 1:24).

the *bíastai*, which are *grannai* and *móra*. The Latin Letters M2, Tou and Eustace's copy also refer to *bestiae* and Hom. B mentions *déor*. In EÍ they come from Hell; in M2 and Tou they have never been seen before; in Hom. B they come from the sea and in Hom. G they come from Hell and, again, have never been seen before. Eustace's copy was shown to give a variant version of the apocalyptic locusts: beasts with female hair, camels' tails and lions' heads. In M2 the beasts are said to make a turbulent sound and M2 and Tou mention terrible peoples after the description of the beasts. In EÍ foreign nations are mentioned in the preceding section about the flying serpents. These details reinforce what was suggested above: that these beasts in the Latin Letters M2, Tou and the Letter of Eustace could be considered as variant versions of the five beasts in EÍ.

The beasts from Hom. G share the following aspects with those from EÍ: they are a divine punishment (1), although not connected with Sunday, coming from Hell (2). They are referred to by an equivalent of *bíastai*, but they are not in a group of five (3). They are great (4) and horrible (5). They come from Hell on earth, where they will stay for five months, but nothing is said about their eagerness to go there (6). As this will all happen at the End of Time (the time of the Antichrist), it should be noted that they are still in Hell waiting for the time to go to the earth, which could perhaps be explained as being withheld (temporarily) by God's mercy (7).

At this point, the question about who has influenced whom arises again (see 3.3.2.1). Priebsch (1906-7, pp. 147-8) first ascribes Hom. G to Pehtred and concludes that Pehtred inserted these beasts in Hom. B. The Irish author of EÍ followed him in this, which is especially noticeable from the number of the beasts. In a postscript, Priebsch (*ibid*, pp. 153-4) withdraws the ascription of Hom. G to Pehtred: he now believes that one of the sources of Hom. G was written by Abbot Adso (see Whitelock, 1982, p. 56) between 949 and 945, a period later than Pehtred's life-time. However, Priebsch (1906-7, p. 154) adds that this source does not mention the hellish beasts. In his later publication Priebsch (1936) does not return to this matter.

Whitelock (1982, pp. 51-8) studies this question too. She does not believe that EÍ is influenced by the common exemplar of Hom. A and B. This posited text is based on Pehtred's book and — as mentioned in 3.3.2.1 — dated by her to not before 962 (*ibid.*, p. 51[640]), whereas EÍ is dated to not later than the middle of the ninth century (*ibid.*, p. 66). Moreover, she rejects Priebsch's line of reasoning about the five monsters. She agrees with Priebsch that the section about the beasts does not occur in one of the sources of Hom. G, but nevertheless sees "no reason to suppose that this comes from an earlier source" (*ibid.*, p. 56). The locusts from the Apc "are described in terms to warrant their description as 'terrible great beasts'" (*ibid.*). Furthermore, she finds it improbable that the number five from EÍ and Hom. B should be traced to the five months mentioned in the

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[640] Wright (1993, p. 267, n. 188) refers to a study by Janet M. Bately, who argues for the late ninth century as the date of the archetype of these sermons.

Apc. The five beasts must have been in the common source of Eí and Hom. B; there is no reason to maintain that Pehtred added them. When she goes into the possible sources of this section she points at the Apc as a source for Eí because here the monsters dwell in Hell, and to Dn 7:3 for Hom. B because these beasts come from the sea and are a divine plague in the past.

I would like to comment upon this view with the following points: first, as can be concluded from the sections above, sources play an important part in the different extant versions of the Sunday Letter. This applies to biblical and non-canonical texts in particular. I see no reason why there would be no source for the five beasts (Whitelock herself refers to the common source of Eí and Hom. B and to Apc and Dn as their possible sources). Second, it is true that one can conclude from Apc 9 that the locusts must be large and horrible, but Hom. G's use of highly similar adjectives as Eí, omission of the term 'locusts' (or *gershoppan*) and use instead of the general term *déor* (which also occurs in Hom. B) are striking parallels which should not be so easily dismissed. Third, I do not find Priebsch's suggestion that the number five comes from the Apc so improbable. He referred to the period of five months; I would like to add that the number five is quite prominent in this part of the Apc: the locusts will appear when the fifth trumpet has sounded and the fifth angel has opened the Pit of the Abyss. Whitelock may very well be right that the five beasts were present in a source used by Eí, Hom. B and — perhaps also — Hom. G. We do not know who wrote about these five beasts for the first time, but it seems probable that it was in a version of the Sunday Letter (or a sermon about it) that is now lost but that may have influenced the Irish Letter, the two Old English sermons, M2, Tou and Eustace's version of the Latin Letter. Or perhaps there were more than one of these lost versions. Unfortunately, Eí and Hom. B are the only extant texts that mention five beasts. The distinction that Whitelock makes between Hell and the sea is not that significant, as I have tried to show above. More important is, that she suggests almost the same two sets of monsters from the Bible as an explanation for the beasts, as I did when dealing with parallel beasts from the Vulgate. The only problem with her second suggestion is that there are just four beasts in Daniel's nocturnal vision. One could add the fifth from the Apc, the beast that rises from the Abyss or the sea and that, according to Hom. G, is the same as the Antichrist. However, the importance of the number five in Apc 9 seems to me to be more convincing than this other option as a source of inspiration.

It is impossible to draw a solid conclusion about these beasts. There are too many missing links. Two 'sets of beasts' seem to be eligible: the four beasts from the sea in Dn and the one from the sea/Abyss in the Apc; and the monstrous locusts from the Pit of the Abyss in the Apc. Some of the Latin Letters and Hom. G seem to refer to the apocalyptic locusts.

Whitelock (1982, p. 57) finally concludes that both Pehtred and the author of Eí may have used a Latin source, independently of each other. Pehtred probably obtained his Latin source in or from Ireland (*ibid.*, p. 58).

I cannot offer a clear theory about the relationship between EÍ and the Old English sermons. The sermons are later but have at the same time used one or more versions of the Sunday Letter which we no longer have and which might be older than or contemporaneous with EÍ. Positing one common exemplar for the Old English sermons and EÍ would seem to be somewhat simplistic. Even though there is a remarkable similarity between the four kinds of monster in Hom. B and EÍ, enough relevant differences remain to be explained. A striking difference is, for instance, the elaborate description EÍ gives of the *brucha* and locusts, whereas Old English sermons give more information about the (flying) serpents than EÍ does. Moreover, if Hom. G talks about the same beasts as Hom. B, then the Old English texts also offer more information about the five hellish beasts than EÍ.

Some **Old and Middle Irish texts**[641] simply mention the presence of beasts in Hell when they describe infernal torments; they do not give many extra details about the monsters. In this way an Old Irish sermon beginning with *Atluchammar buidi do Día uilechumachtach*, 'We give thanks to Almighty God' (see note 454), refers to the everlasting monsters (*bíastai*) of Hell (§4[642]). A poem about the Day of Judgment, starting with *Bráth, ní ba beg a brisim*, 'Doom! Not slight will be its uproar' (edited and translated by O'Keeffe, 1907a, who dates it to the 10th century; *ibid.*, p. 29), describes Hell with, for instance, its many fearful monsters ("*a ilpíasta áigthidi*") and its fiery rotten sea ("*a muir tuilbrén teinntidhi*"; §15). Finally, there is a brief story about St Brendan who goes to Hell to retrieve the soul of his mother (see Vendryes, 1910, pp. 309-11; cp. Grosjean, 1937, pp. 280-2). When he returns he tells about the horrors he has seen, among which the monsters (*bíastai*). Obviously, the descriptions given in these texts are too general for them to be compared with the five monsters.

As I state above, ICUC contains two kinds of description of Hell: first, one of the Uí Chorra sees Hell in a nocturnal vision; second, the Uí Chorra and others see infernal environments during their sea voyage. In the nocturnal vision (§14) first the four rivers of Hell are seen, two of them consisting of toads/frogs and serpents (see 3.3.2.4). Immediately afterwards the visionary sees the Monster in Hell ("*béist i n-ifirn*"; Van

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[641] CMM §§34-7 describes how magic pigs, a swarm of three-headed creatures and a saffron-coloured (?) flock of birds come from the cave of Crúachain, Ireland's Gate of Hell. These beasts are very different from the five monsters central here. They are neither a divine punishment (1), nor designated *bíastai* nor numbered five (the pigs cannot be counted; 3), nor huge (4), nor horrible (5), although they lay waste the land. They do come from Hell (2) and are apparently eager to go to the earth (6), but nothing is said about God's mercy keeping them back (7) as they do come and destroy the earth. The entire scene in which these groups of monsters appear and disappear is completely different from that of the monsters dealt with here. (For more about Crúachain or Crúachu, see Ó hUiginn, 1988.)

[642] The division into sections is given in the edition by Meyer (1903a).

Hamel, 1941, p. 98), which has many heads and feet[643]. We are told that anyone would die seeing it. In Heaven the visionary sees the Lord Himself and the section starts with the remark that the Uí Chorra have served an evil lord — the Devil — whereas the lord that they have wronged is a good lord. This preceding juxtaposition makes it probable that the Monster of Hell is the same as the Devil. This monster is not described as a divine punishment but it is in Hell (2), is called *bíast* (3), is probably large as it has so many heads and feet (4), and the mention of people dying because of its sight makes it probable that it is horrible. Moreover, the vision is called horrible and dreadful (*gránda aduathmar*; 5). There are no parallels for the last two aspects. This beast, therefore, shares some characteristics with the five beasts, but it is not the same. It is the personification of moral evil.

The other monsters are mentioned in the part of the story that deals with the voyage. When they are in an infernal environment and have the conversation with the bird (see 3.3.2.3), they see other birds coming from three rivers: rivers of otters, eels and black swans respectively (§57). The birds are transformed souls; the beasts are devils, pursuing them. The birds are fleeing from their punishment; on Sunday they are allowed to come out of Hell (§§56-7). The beasts mentioned here are thus divine punishments (1) but no Sunday sin is mentioned in this section. The devilish beasts have apparently left Hell (2/6) to punish the sinners but, as it is Sunday, they are kept from it (7). These beasts are obviously not the same as the five beasts, but the section gives an interesting variant version of the latter two aspects.

The last three kinds of hellish monster are found in the infernal sea (2) where people are punished for their Sunday sins (1). The fiery horse (§63) was shown to be a variant version of Eí's fiery horse (3.3.2.3), and the black birds with fiery beaks and red fiery talons (§64) can be considered as variant versions of other infernal birds that torment people, as for instance in ApcPe. The last kind is found in the episode described in 2.3.2.5: the abode of death or the fiery sea with many heads and the *bíastai* that try to pierce the boat (§66). This episode also gives an interesting variant version of the last two aspects: the beasts desire to kill the voyagers (6) but they cannot go against God's will (7).

SLB §20 enumerates a whole series of beasts that are found in Hell (2) as a divine punishment (1). They have already been mentioned (in 3.3.2.1 and 3.3.2.4), but here I give the full description: many keen, greedy, gluttonous, broad-eared, long-clawed, sharp-pawed dogs; keen, rough toads/frogs that destroy each other; very swift, poisonous serpents around the Devil's city; fierce, rending lions; hideous, taloned, fearful, iron birds; scratching, furrowing cats and, beside every other evil, there is the Monster: conspicuous, awful and with crowds of red glowing coals. The Beast has a hundred necks, a hundred heads, five hundred teeth in each

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[643] For a discussion of the Monster of Hell which includes Old English texts, see Wright (1993, pp. 156-65).

head, a hundred hands, a hundred palms on every hand and a hundred nails on every palm. Hell is called the Devil's tents and camps (§19), the Devil's house, the Glen of Tortures, the Devil's city and the Devil is called the King of Evil, the Monster and the Abbot with his monks (the sinners). §20 ends with the remark that every evil the sinners did is caused by his seduction of them; he incited every evil. These inhabitants of Hell can be found in non-canonical texts as well (although cats were not given there) and are general variant versions of the five beasts; too general for any further conclusions to be drawn. The Beast is a punishment (1) in Hell (2) called *bíast* (3) and is huge (4) and horrible (5). The Monster is the cause of the torture of humans because of his temptation and seduction. Now it is too late for mercy: the prayer of the sinners will not be heard in Hell (§20). They must "sit a merciless seat on glowing coals of great fire before the king of evil in the Glen of tortures" (Stokes, 1879-80, p. 253). The Monster has thus more in common with the five beasts than the other infernal beasts, but it is precisely the fact that the Monster is single that makes it different from the five.

Some of these beasts are also found in Hell as described in Canto V of SnR (cp. also 3.3.2.4). Hell is called a fair prison for Lucifer, a dark country and a horrible (*"gráinne"*) city (lines 869-73). The text mentions the bestial hordes (l. 877) and all kinds of torture which seem to be around the swollen beast (*"imon mbéist mbuirr"*; l. 881), also called the 'horned roarer'. The text then refers to the oppressive sea with multitudes of heads (l. 882), reminiscent of the fiery sea with heads above the waves in the *Vision of Laisrén* and the fiery sea filled with (beasts and) heads in ICUC §66 (see also note 570). The swollen Beast has five hundred heads, five hundred teeth in every head, a hundred arms, a hundred hands and a hundred nails on every hand (ll. 885-8). After describing the Beast the text continues with specimens of the bestial hordes: multitudes of black beetles; many slender, round-headed worms; many sharp, tormenting, biting wolfpacks; many enduring, red-mouthed beasts (*"mbíasta"*; Greene and Kelly, 1976, p. 15, translate 'brutes'); many venomous toads/frogs contending on the floor of the city; many highly active serpents around the city attacking everybody; many cooking-pits of the fierce monsters (*"na mbled mberg"*) and of the red scaly beasts (*"mbíasta"*), and many fierce, swift lions (ll. 889-900). Then the fire and seas around Hell are described, among them the above-mentioned sea of serpents (ll. 901-12). Furthermore, the sharp cry of a griffin (*"gáir gér gríbi"*; Greene and Kelly, 1976, p. 17, translate: 'of a monster') is mentioned (l. 921), with the focus again switching to the King of Hell (ll. 937-52). Among the adjectives describing him are *"gríbda"* (l. 938), 'griffin-like, fierce, valorous', and *"gránne"* (l. 947). The same conclusion can be drawn as in the case of SLB: as parallels the many bestial creatures are too general for the five beasts, and the Monster or King of Hell is too specific. But the latter shares several aspects with the five beasts: being in Hell (2), being called *bíast* (3), having a large body (4) and being horrible (5).

The Monster of Hell can also be found in an unpublished text from LFF. Seymour (1923c, p. 187) dates the text to the 11th century and gives

a translation of the part that describes the Beast; Wright (1993, p. 164) supplies a transcription of the text of the manuscript. This Monster has 500 heads, 500 teeth in each head, a hundred hands with a hundred palms on each hand, a hundred fingers on each palm, a hundred claws on each finger. With these hands the Monster seizes souls and feeds itself. Again, here is a large, horrible Monster in Hell[644].

In 3.3.2.4 I described the monsters that Cú Chulainn encountered in the iron fortress in the land of Scáth: the serpents, the toads/frogs, the sharp beaked beasts (*míla*) and horrible draconic monsters. For the last kind the Irish text reads: "*bíastai granni dracondai*" (Best, Bergin, 1929, p. 283[645]), which designation gives the same substantive (*bíastai*) and adjective (*grann(a)i*) as in the case of the five monsters. Moreover, the mention of the fortress of Scáth with its iron ramparts on seven walls with locks and doors of iron bears reminiscence to the description of Hell as an iron city with fiery iron walls and twelve towers in the (Hiberno?-)Latin homily mentioned above. In this iron city the old dragon lives; in ScCC Cú Chulainn's soul is carried off into the red charcoal (stanza XXVI) where the Demon with rage dwells (XXV). The context of the horrors in ScCC becomes different: from a fearful foreign country the scene changes into an infernal environment, where demons are the permanent scourge of the Ulster heroes (XXX). Cú Chulainn's poem does not give many details about Hell, elaborating more on his adventures on earth. The details about Hell comprise the following points: Hell is inhabited by the Demon and scourging demons; there is red charcoal and finally, the pains of Hell are referred to. The terrestrial terrors described serve to emphasise the infernal torments that are not described. Cú Chulainn's power on earth was tremendous; it is nothing in Hell, where the Demon is the most powerful one. The Ulster heroes are likewise doomed to an unheroic existence in the infernal regions and are tormented by demons. As said above, the Demon is not described either. There is thus some similarity between the five monsters and the monsters in ScCC, except that the latter are not in Hell itself.

In TB several mysterious kinds of beast are mentioned; I will deal here with the ones which might have some relation with the infernal regions or other spheres beyond the earth. There are twelve shaking-beasts ("*crith-mhil*") with fiery heads hidden in the zones of the Seven Heavens. They blow the twelve winds around the world (§29). In these same zones there are the earlier-mentioned (3.3.2.1) dragons with breaths of fire, which are tower-headed and have diseases in their flanks. They bring forth the crash of thunder and they blow (*do-infet*) bolts of lightning from their pupils (§29). These two groups of beasts/dragons in §29 could have parallels in §§86-7: in §86 stars are said to run (*reithid*) to urge on the dragons that

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[644] Seymour (1923c, p. 187) refers to the *Fifteen Signs of Doomsday*, which gives a similar Monster of Hell. However, this text is dated to the 13th century or possibly later (*id.*, 1930, p. 121), beyond the scope of this study.
[645] The stanza that names these beasts (XVI) is difficult to understand.

blow on the world. These dragons could be the same as the shaking-beasts. Other stars (§87) run for fifty years and then sleep for seven years. It seems as if they are sleeping in the glens of tears. They are awakened by the shout of the holy angels and the voices of the dragons that dwell near (?) the glen ("*la gotha inna ndracon dogairet an glenn*"; Stokes, 1905b, p. 126). Is this environment infernal? Are these dragons the same as the weather dragons of §29 or are they different? More study is needed to answers questions like these. For this study it suffices to conclude that there is no connection with the five beasts: only the glen(s) of tears might be infernal (2); there is no mention of punishment (1), nor of a large size (4), nor of horribleness (5), nor of eagerness to go to people (6), nor of God's saving mercy (7); the shaking-beasts are designated *míla* and the number mentioned is twelve, not five (3).

There are also monsters referred to in the part of the text that describes the journey the sun makes through the night. In §69 the sun shines upon young people in pleasant fields. They utter a cry to Heaven because they fear the beast (*míl*) "which kills many thousands of hosts beneath the waves to the south" (Carey, 1994, p. 15). The enclosure of the great beast (*míl mór*) is referred to. Twenty-four warriors arise against this beast and they invoke the valley of punishments against it (§71). I have already quoted §74 about the beast (*míl*) that causes the tides (see 1.3.2). Furthermore, the sun shines upon the dark, tearful plain where dragons have been placed under the mist (§77). The valley of torments is a name for Hell (see also Carey, 1994, p. 30) and the dark, tearful plain seems also to have an infernal aspect. I would like to refer to Carey (1994, pp. 28-31) who has connected the beasts described in §§69, 71 and 77 with Egyptian monsters, among which Apophis (§69), and the beast of §74 with Leviathan and other beasts (*ibid*, pp. 16-7; see also Borsje, Ó Cróinín, 1995). Although these beasts are thus very interesting, there is no real link with the five beasts of EÍ: occasionally they may share an aspect, as, for instance, their location in an infernal environment (2) or being large (4), but there is no combined set of shared characteristics.

Finally, TB describes Hell in §§108-20, stating in §110 that it is not known which is more numerous — all the sands of the seas or all the kinds of monster (*biastai*) that mangle the souls in Hell. Moreover, it tells that in this valley of punishments (§112) there is no mercy (§120). This obviously gives a broadly general parallel to the five beasts, and at this stage I can conclude that although TB gives fascinating references to dragons and beasts it does not provide us with a clearer view of the five monsters.

In FA the journey of the soul after its departure from the body (*i.e.*, death) is told. The soul has to ascend through the Seven Heavens, which is difficult (§§15-8). Having arrived in the Seventh Heaven the soul comes into the presence of God (§18): if it is a just soul it can rejoice, but if it is unjust God will order the angels to deliver it into the hand of Lucifer in the depths of Hell (§19). The descent such souls have to make is described as follows in §20:

"Is and sin dano slucit   "Moreover, then it is that

na dá draic déc thentide
cach anmain d'éis a céle
co curend úadi in draic inichtarach

i ngin Díabail.
Is and sin fogeib comslaintius
cacha huilc la frecnarcus
Díabail tria bithu sír"
(Colwell, 1952, p. 215)

twelve fiery dragons
swallow down each soul, one after
another, until the lowest dragon hurls
it from himself
into the mouth of the Devil.
Then does it receive the plenitude of
all evil in the presence
of the Devil throughout eternity"
(*ibid.*, p. 216).

This is part of the description the angel reveals to the soul of the visionary; now the angel takes this soul to visit the nethermost Hell (§21). The first land is black, scorched and void. On the farther side is a valley filled with fire. Here live the above-mentioned (3.3.2.1) eight beasts (*bíastai*) with their eyes like burning lumps (§21). Over the fiery valley is a very great bridge[646] (§22), which is high in the middle and low at the ends. Three groups try to cross it, but the bridge changes its form for each group. First it is broad, with one group therefore able to cross unharmed and without terror or fear. Then the bridge is narrow at the beginning and broad at the end; with the next group also able to cross but after exposure to great danger. The third group is not so lucky:

"In slóg dedenach immórro,
lethan dóib ar thús in drochet,

cóel ocus cumung fo dóid
co tuitet día medón
isin glend ngaibthech cetna
i mbrágtib na n-ocht mbiast
mbruthach út[647] ferait a n-aittreb
isin glind"
(Colwell, 1952, p. 229)

"However, the last group
finds the bridge broad at the beginning,
but straight and narrow at the end,
so that they fall from its middle
into the same dangerous valley,
into the jaws of the eight burning
beasts there who make their dwelling
in the valley"
(*ibid.*, p. 230).

Other bestial punishments mentioned in FA are the fiery chains in the form of snakes (§25) and the stinking raw dogs (§28); both were already mentioned in 3.3.2.4. Finally, in §30 a lament is uttered for those who will have to live with the family of the Devil in Hell. The horrors of Hell are again enumerated and among them are stinking lakes full of beasts

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[646] According to Dumville (1977-78, pp. 71-2), the bridge episode in FA is an allegorical interpretation of the Gregorian threefold division of souls. He refers, incidentally, to the beasts as 'serpents'.

[647] A better translation of *út* in this context seems to be 'aforementioned', as the eight burning beasts were mentioned earlier in the text. DIL gives this as a second meaning of *út* (DIL, *s.v. út* Ib), and as an example refers to this text in the LU version of FA. It should be noted, though, that DIL also gives the variant reading of LB, which has *ucut*, 'yonder'. This reading and the first meaning of *út* in DIL (yonder) may have been the basis of Colwell's choice of 'there' in his translation.

(*bíastai*). The LB version is somewhat more elaborate: it moreover mentions great poisonous, stinking seas with a rough storm upon them along with fiery-crested dragons and various other beasts (*bíastai*) therein, and LB refers to demons who incite mangy stinking dogs against the souls of the sinners (Colwell, 1952, pp. 281-2, 312). In the LU text it is said there are great seas with fearful storms and that the Devil lives in those seas. The four rivers of Hell are enumerated immediately thereafter (see above, 3.3.2.4).

The fiery chains in the form of snakes belong to serpent punishments (see 3.3.2.4); the dogs probably come from non-canonical infernal descriptions as, for instance, VisEz; and the lakes filled with beasts and seas filled with dragons and other beasts[648] should be categorised as general hellish descriptions because no further details are given. The twelve dragons and eight beasts deserve more attention.

The eight burning beasts share characteristics with the beasts in ApcPa Red. XI and the other Redactions that give them, as described above. The motif is the same, although details differ. The bridge is across a fiery valley in FA and across a fiery[649] river in the Redactions. In FA there are eight burning beasts with fiery eyes living in the valley; in the Redactions there are many diabolical beasts swimming in the river. Another difference is that the shape of the bridge changes in FA[650] whereas it stays the same in the Redactions. In both traditions the sinful souls fall prey to the beasts. The beasts in FA §§21-2 should be categorised as variant versions of those in the ApcPa Redactions; they only share a few aspects with the five beasts: being a punishment (1) in Hell (2) and designated (eight) *bíastai* (3).

The just have no problems with these eight beasts. This motif is also given in VisEz where the sinners are attacked by lions and young dogs/camels, while the just can continue their journey with ease. FA gives this motif in another context too: the ascent through the Seven Heavens means torment for the sinners and peaceful passage for the just. The number twelve occurs several times. In the Third Heaven the just pass in the twinkling of an eye through a fiery furnace with a flame 12,000 cubits

[648] One could perhaps compare them with the seas around Hell and the sea of serpents in SnR Canto V.
[649] The texts mention a horrible river, but this is probably the same as the fiery river in which souls stand immersed to different levels. (See note 623.)
[650] A bridge which changes its shape also occurs in TE §67-8. This bridge, too, is low at the ends and high in the middle; it throws off people who want to cross. After three attempts and being jeered at by onlookers, Cú Chulainn enters his warrior frenzy and is thus able to jump onto and over it. Before crossing this bridge, he travels through a narrow valley (§65) full of spectres or monsters. (The text reads "*lán di urthrachtaib (.i. di fúathaib)*" (Van Hamel, 1933/78, p. 48). The first term might be a corrupt form of *airdrech*, *airdrach* (also spelled *aurdrach*, *aurdrag*), 'sprite, phantom', or of *arracht*, 'apparition, spectre, monster'; the text explains the term in a gloss by the word *fúath*, 'a hideous or supernatural form, a spectre, apparition, monster'.)

high. The sinners are baked and burned in the furnace for twelve years. At the entrance of the Fourth Heaven is a fiery stream and it is surrounded by a wall of fire, 12,000 cubits broad. The just walk through as if it does not exist; the souls of the sinners are held there in misery for twelve years (§17). Neither would the just appear to have to encounter the twelve dragons.

Twelve dragons have been mentioned earlier in this section: they are part of the description of Hell as an iron city with fiery iron walls, twelve towers, and the twelve dragons administering twelve punishments with (?) twelve fiery scourges in the (Hiberno?-)Latin homily (De Bruyne, 1907, p. 323), which is supposed to use the 'Seven Heavens' apocryphon as a source. The number twelve can also be found in the description the homily gives of the Heavens: the fiery furnace with its flame of 12,000 cubits in which the sinners remain for twelve years; the fiery river 12,000 cubits high in which the sinners spend twelve years and the sermon adds the detail of the Sixth Heaven with a wheel on which the sinners are tormented for twelve years. In the Seventh Heaven sits the Lord who hands the sinner over to an angel who plunges the unlucky soul into Hell. In my view, this journey may lead the traveller via the twelve dragons that are located on one tower. In the city of Hell is the old dragon; FA refers to the Devil as the last recipient of the sinners. Moreover, in TB twelve shaking beasts (dragons?) that cause the twelve winds and twelve dragons that cause thunder and lightning live in the zones of the Seven Heavens. The location of the twelve TB dragons seems to be the same as that of the twelve FA dragons, but their function is of a different kind. The TB dragons have a cosmological function, as they are connected with weather phenomena; the FA dragons have an eschatological function, as they are related to infernal punishments. It should be noted that the functions of the dragons correspond with the genre of the texts in which they occur: TB is a cosmological text and FA is eschatological. I will now advert to a theory Carey proposes about the roots of the twelve dragons.

The number twelve also occurs in the part of TB dealing with the fiery circuit of the sun: at night the sun illuminates the twelve plains beneath the edges of the world (§§64-5). Carey (1994, pp. 19-21) shows that in later texts two doctrines can be distinguished: first, the sun travels through the belly of Leviathan at night and, second, the sun shines "successively on a place of punishment, a subterranean sea, and a paradisal region" (*ibid.*, p. 21). In the second doctrine the journey of the sun is divided in several periods of which, according to some texts, the total amount is twelve hours (see *ibid.*, p. 20). Carey continues his search in texts much older than TB, referring to funerary texts dating from the Egyptian New Kingdom that describe the following idea:

> "(...) the sun traverses a series of underworld regions between its setting and its rising (...). Some of the most influential of these texts divide the journey into twelve schematic tableaux, corresponding to the twelve hours of the night" (Carey, 1994, p. 22).

At this point one could wonder what the twelve hours of the nocturnal

sun in TB and Egyptian texts have to do with the twelve infernal dragons
from FA; there seems, however, to be a link in *Pistis Sophia*, 'The
believing Wisdom (?)' (PS; edition by Carl Schmidt and translation by
Violet MacDermot in Schmidt, MacDermot, 1978). This is a Coptic
Gnostic gospel, originally written in Greek in Egypt in the third century
(Henri Charles Puech and Beate Blatz in Schneemelcher, 1904/87, pp. 290-
2). In this text we can find a combination of one dragon, twelve infernal
places and the light of the sun at night. Mary asks Jesus about the outer
darkness and how many places of punishment it contains (§126). The
answer of Jesus is lengthy; relevant here is the part which mentions a
dragon surrounding the globe with its tail in its mouth and representing the
place of punishment of the dead:

> "The outer darkness is a great dragon whose tail is in its mouth,
> and it is outside the whole world, and it surrounds the whole
> world. And there is a great number of places of judgment within it,
> and it has twelve chambers of severe punishments, and an archon
> is in every chamber and the faces of the archons are different from
> one another" (Schmidt, MacDermot, 1978, p. 635[651]).

Each of the archons of the twelve chambers has a name according to the
hour, and each of their faces changes according to the hour (§126). Sinful
souls will be taken through the mouth of the tail of the dragon; the dragon
returns its tail to its own mouth and encloses the souls. In this way the
souls are taken into the outer darkness (§127). In his mercy, the Saviour
tells how souls can be released from the dragon (§§128-30). Mary also
wants to know whether the dragon can come into this world (§131) and
this is the answer she receives:

> "When the light of the sun is outside (the world) it covers the
> darkness of the dragon. But when the sun is beneath the world, the
> darkness of the dragon remains as a veil of the sun. (...) the world
> is not able to bear the darkness of the dragon in its true form, else
> it would be dissolved and perish at the same time" (Schmidt,
> MacDermot, 1978, p. 665).

I would like to refer to Carey's study (1994, pp. 27-8, 31-3) for a theory
about how ideas from Egyptian texts reached Ireland. I conclude this part

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[651] PS also relates that Jeu (who is the First Man, the Overseer of the Light, the
Messenger of the First Ordinance) has placed an angel at each door of the
chambers to keep watch over the dragon so that it does not rebel (§126). In
ApcAb 10:10 the Angel Iaoel is appointed to hold the 'Leviathans'; he is also
ordered to loosen Hades (ApcAb 10:11). Abraham sees the Abyss, its torments,
lower depths and perdition (ApcAb 21:3), the sea and the world lying upon
Leviathan (ApcAb 21:4; quoted in 1.3.2). It seems not unlikely that this is a
reference to the world encircled by Leviathan lying in the sea/Abyss; an image
comparable with that in PS.

of the search with Carey's observation that it does not seem improbable that the idea of the twelve dragons may be connected with the twelve hours of the night, a concept derived from an Egyptian context that travelled by way of Gnostic and other non-canonical texts to Ireland[652].

FA tells thus that the sinful soul lands in the mouth of the Devil. This seems to be connected with the ideas that Hell is a Beast and the Beast is the Devil. However, in §30 of the LU version of FA the Devil is said to live in the infernal seas. These three ideas — 1) Hell is a Beast; 2) the Beast is in Hell; 3) the Beast is the Devil — are also present in other texts described above. I will now summarise these findings.

The first idea, *i.e.* that Hell is a Beast, is found in the following texts: in III Greek Bar the dragon/serpent eats people who lived badly and its belly is Hades. The beast like a sea monster in *Pastor Hermae* with fiery locusts coming from its mouth can perhaps also be connected with the Abyss. The belly of the worm Azazel in ApcAb is equated with Hell. In ATh the dragon that is the son of the Devil encompasses the depths of Hell. The outer darkness is the dragon with its twelve chambers of punishment in PS. In NBA the sinful soul is swallowed by the Devil, who is called Leviathan, and by Hell, which is depicted as a fiery mountain. FA makes the soul land in the mouth of the Devil via the twelve dragons.

The LU version of FA says that the Devil dwells in great infernal seas. This is not directly a representation of the second idea that the Beast lives in Hell, but the earlier mention of the souls falling into the Devil's mouth seems to hint at a bestial image of the Evil One. In VisEz an immortal, enormous (or, according to another manuscript tradition, 70 cubits long) worm draws in and breathes out sinners who are full of every bad thing. In III Greek Bar the dragon not only *is* Hades, it also seems to lie *in* Hades/the sea. In ATh the dragon that is the son of the Devil not only encompasses but also inhabits Hell and in the same text another dragon lies in the world ocean with its tail in its mouth. The dragon in AP seems to dwell in Hell. In NBA the Devil lives under the name Leviathan in the fiery mountain, which is Hell, in the infernal part of the ocean in the North. In the (Hiberno?-)Latin homily the old dragon lives in the iron city of tears. ICUC describes the Monster of Hell with its many heads and feet. In SLB the Monster in Hell has a hundred heads, 50,000 teeth and a hundred hands. A similar description of the Monster is found in SnR.

In these last five texts (AP, the (Hiberno?-)Latin homily, ICUC, SLB and SnR) the third idea is present: the Beast is the Devil. In NBA the Devil has the name of a beast: Leviathan. This Beast of Hell deserves

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[652] Other theories have also been suggested about the origin of the twelve dragons: Apophis/Apap from ancient Egyptian mythology (Stokes and Boswell in Boswell, 1908/72, p. 196, n. 1); a Coptic version of ApcPa in which creatures seize the souls, chew them up, swallow and vomit them up pitilessly after which other creatures repeat the process relentlessly (Willard, Marcel Dando and Dumville in Dumville, 1977-78, p. 68) and a Gnostic text in which a dragon swallows souls and returns them to the world by its tail, where they are reborn (Stevenson, 1983, p. 32).

more attention. I will now describe this motif in the Redactions of ApcPa.
I stated above that I would deal with the early Redactions (Reds. VI and
XI) only, but in two instances I diverge from this. First, in the case of the
beasts under the bridge across the fiery river I had to include other relevant
Redactions to get a clearer view of this motif. Second, I will now use the
other Redactions as well in order to gain further insight into the Beast of
Hell. I do this because in these descriptions of the Beast several aspects
from other texts come together. I return first to the main text: ApcPa.

When St Paul is about to enter Hell, he first sees a large river of
water. This is the River Ocean (*Oceanus*) that waters the whole earth, is
the foundation of (the gates of) Heaven and encompasses the earth (ApcPa
§§21, 31[653]). Beyond the ocean is a place of darkness, sorrow and sad-
ness. St Paul sighs and sees a river of fire in which people are immersed
to different levels (§31). In ApcPa there is no bridge across this river and
neither is the Beast of Hell mentioned, nor is the Devil referred to. The
only eligible beast in this text is the restless worm with two heads and one
cubit in length (§42), but the text does not connect this worm with the
Devil/Beast of Hell and gives no description of its actions.

Before I turn to the Redactions of ApcPa, I focus first upon the worm
from VisEz because this beast is found in a context similar to those of the
parallel descriptions of the entrance to Hell in FA and the Redactions of
ApcPa. VisEz 34-36 describes how, in an obscure place, sinners are
inhaled and exhaled by the huge, immortal worm. The bridge motif is
given immediately thereafter (by six of its manuscripts), albeit without
beasts in the fiery stream under the bridge. FA first mentions the twelve
dragons passing on the soul to the Devil's mouth, then the scene with the
bridge over the fiery valley with the eight fiery beasts follows.

I will now describe how the Redactions of ApcPa render this scene,
which one might call 'the entrance to Hell[654]'. It is found in Redactions I
§§1-3 (Ia: Brandes, 1885, pp. 65-6; Ib: Silverstein, 1935, pp. 153-4; Ic:
id, 1959, pp. 226-7); II §1-3 (Silverstein, 1935, p. 156); III §§1-5 (IIIa-d:
ibid., pp. 160-9; IIIe: *id*., 1959, pp. 229-30); Br §§ 1-3 (*ibid*., p. 235); IV
(Brandes, 1885, pp. 75-6); V (Silverstein, 1935, pp. 196-9); VII (*ibid*., pp.
205-6); VIII (*ibid*., pp. 209-10); IX §§2-6 (*id*., 1959, pp. 238-41); X §§1-
5 (*ibid*., pp. 244-5) and XI §§4-5 (Dwyer, 1988, p. 126). I will focus upon
the elements of the rivers, the bridge and the Beast. In order to make this
comparison a little less complex I will leave out the fiery trees, the fiery
wheel, the fiery furnace and the plagues of Hell which can be found in
some of these Redactions in this context, usually in front of the Gates of

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[653] St Paul sees the river twice: first, after his descent from the Three Heavens
(§21) and, second, before his entry into Hell (§31). In between he sees the golden
city of Christ with its twelve walls, twelve towers, twelve gates and four rivers
(§23). It will now be evident that this is a mirror image of the city of the Devil.
This can also be found in other texts. I will leave this further aside, however, as
this study focuses upon Hell and its torments.
[654] This does not apply to VisEz because here the entrance is through fiery gates.

Hell.

Some Redactions start, like ApcPa, with the large river of water called Ocean. They mention a large river of water (I, VIII), a large river (II, VII), a river of water (IIIa, IIIb, IIIe) and an infernal river of water (IIIc, X). This river encompasses the earth (I, II, VII, VIII) and is called Ocean (I, II, VII, VIII). Then the three rivers of Hell are referred to (I, VII, VIII; I leave out their names, which differ). The terrible place which is dark and sad occurs in all the Redactions that give this scene except for Red. XI. The descriptions and names differ. Some Redactions already mention the fiery river here (Ic, II, III, Br, VII, VIII, X). Other Redactions give the horrible river (IV, V, IX) and X mentions both the fiery and the horrible river. The scene with the beasts (IV, V, IX, X, XI) and the bridge (IV, V, VIII, IX, X) follows. In Red. VIII the bridge is over the River Ocean. Many Redactions now mention a horrible monster which is either a dragon (I, II, IIIa-c, IIIe, Br, VII, VIII, X) or a demon (IX). All these Redactions then describe the people being immersed to different levels in the fiery river. (This scene is absent in Red. VI.)

Comparison of the scene given by the Redactions of ApcPa with those in VisEz and FA reveals an inversion: VisEz and FA first mention a beast/the Devil that swallows souls before giving the bridge scene; the Redactions first describe the bridge and then the Beast. The Beast splits the river scene or — if Wright is right (see note 623) — divides the horrible river from the fiery one. Some Redactions start with the River Ocean and the three rivers of Hell; FA and ICUC mention four rivers of Hell. The LU version of FA relates that the Devil lives in the infernal seas and immediately follows this up with the enumeration of the four rivers of Hell; in ICUC the mention of the four rivers immediately precedes the description of the Monster of Hell with its many heads and feet. It is now worth while having a closer look at the Beast of Hell as it is described in the Redactions of ApcPa.

I will first describe the dragon and then the demon. The Beast of Hell is either a huge (*ingens*: I, IIIa, IIIc, IIIe, VII, VIII, X; *magnus*: Br) or a fiery (*igneus*: II, IIIb) dragon. It has three heads (II), 100 (I, Br, VII, VIII) or 1,000 (IIIa-c, IIId, X). It has 1,000 eyes ((IIIa-c, IIIe). It has (in each head) 1,000 teeth (I, II, IIIa-c, IIIe, Br, VIII, X). Red. VII just says that the dragon has teeth in each head. The teeth glow like a lion (Ia-b) or it has heads like lions' heads and teeth like lions' teeth (Ic). In Red. VII it has a lion in each tooth and Red. VIII compares every tooth with a lion. According to some texts, the teeth are as sharp as a sword (II, IIIc, Br). Its eyes are also as sharp as a sword (I, II, IIIa-c, IIIe, VIII, X), or the eyes are glowing like a fiery oven (Br). Almost all these Redactions say that its mouths are always open and that it swallows the sinners. At the end of the description a special class of sinners (princes and satraps) is sometimes named. Red. VII does not refer to the eternally open mouths but it does say that all the unjust are sent into its mouths. The dragon is called Parthemon (Ia-b), Parimot (Ic), Bachimach (II), Pahtmot (IIIa), Patinot (IIIb), Patimon (IIIe), Parphimon (VII), Pantemam (VIII) and Patinut (X). Out of the Dragon go forth frogs (Ia, Ib, II, IIIa, IIIe, Br, VIII), worms

(Ic), serpents (Ic, II, IIIa-c, IIIe, Br, VII, X), scorpions (Ic), spiders[655] (Ic), and all kinds of vermin (all these Redactions).

Red. IX gives a devil or demon instead of the dragon. At the head of the bridge there is a devil called Belzebut. From his mouth come flames and black sulphur which change into many colours. He swallows the sinful souls and does not rest day or night, always desiring to eat. His teeth are like arrows and his tongue is like a sharp sword. The sinful souls take on the colour of sulphur when they are in his belly; when they go out of it[656] they are black as coals. This demon is so horrible that if he appears in the world all men and women will die from fear and the infernal stench. (I have selected relevant characteristics of the description.)

To start with the devil: he shares with the two-headed worm in ApcPa the characteristic that he never rests. The huge worm in VisEz also makes the sinful souls change their colour by in- and exhaling them. In ApcAb the demon/worm Azazel burns the sinners with his tongue and putrefies them in his belly. In NBA the sinful soul is swallowed by Hell, which is a mountain that in- and exhales flames. The soul is, moreover, also swallowed by the Devil to whom the name of the sea monster Leviathan is given. Being so frightful that people would die upon seeing it is also a characteristic of the Monster of Hell in ICUC; when the locusts of the Apc will come upon the earth, people will seek death and, if the dragon from PS were to show itself, the world would perish.

Even more aspects from monsters mentioned above can be detected in the description of the dragon. The comparison (of the dragon's teeth) with lion's teeth (Red. Ic) is applied to the teeth of the apocalyptic locusts too (Apc 9:8; cp. Ioel 1:6) and to the beasts in the Old English Hom. G. The comparison of heads with lions' heads in the same redaction is also found in the Latin Sunday Letter of Eustace, where the reference is to the same apocalyptic beasts that have two heads in the Latin Letter M2. However, these beasts come into action as a group and travel across the earth, whereas the Dragon is a single beast staying in Hell.

Instances of single beasts with many heads and a beast coming from their mouth are the dragon and the beast from the sea/Abyss in the Apc. The dragon (also present in AP), or Satan, has seven heads and a spirit like a frog comes from its mouth. The same is true of the beast from the sea/Abyss, which moreover has a mouth like a lion's mouth. A beast with only one head from whose mouth fiery locusts go forth is the beast like a sea monster from *Pastor Hermae*. Single beasts swallowing the sinners are the dragon in III Bar, the worm in VisEz, the dragon in PS, and probably the worm Azazel in ApcAb and the dragon in ATh.

Leviathan (PsH) or the dragon (PsG) has more than one head as can be

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[655] *Arane* is perhaps a mistake for *rane*, which other texts give.
[656] The edition reads *"cum esciunt"*, but Silverstein (1959, p. 240, n. 226) suggests *exeunt*; the manuscript reads *escūt* (=*exciunt*) or *eseūt* (=*exeunt*).

read in Ps 73:14, in which God crushes its heads. It has been argued that this monster possesses seven heads (see Day, 1985, p. 24) but, strictly speaking, the *Psalm* does not mention a number. The beast and the dragon from the Apc have seven heads, whereas the dragon in the Redactions has a multitude of heads. This only has a parallel in the Irish texts: the Monster has many heads in ICUC, a hundred heads in SLB (like Reds. I, Br, VII and VIII), and 500 in SnR. Some Redactions say that the dragon has 1,000 teeth in each head; the number given in SLB and SnR is 500. The many feet (ICUC), hands (SLB) or arms (SnR) have no parallel in the Redactions. From the mouth of the Monster go forth no beasts, but in the descriptions the vermin of Hell can be found very close to it. The beasts most often mentioned in the Redactions are the frogs and the serpents. These two kinds form two of the four rivers of Hell in ICUC, in which they are followed by a description of the Monster. These beasts also precede the description of the Monster in SLB, which moreover mentions dogs, cats, lions and birds. In SnR, first the Monster is portrayed and then the 'vermin of Hell'. These include the toads/frogs and serpents along with beetles, worms, wolves, beasts, monsters and lions. To these Irish parallels — the huge amount of heads and teeth, and the vermin of Hell, especially the toads/frogs and serpents — one more should be added which was not given above: the name of the Beast.

The names of the Beast are: the dragon Satan in Apc 12; the worm Azazel in ApcAb; the demon Belzebut in Red. IX of ApcPa; and Parthemon with its many variant forms in the other Redactions[657]. Satan, the Devil does not need any clarification; the other names do. Azazel is a name in the Hebrew Bible (Lv 16:8, 10, 26), connected with the scapegoat ritual. The name does not occur in the Vulgate. What exactly the name meant in the OT is unknown; in early Judaism (I En, ApcAb) Azazel became the name of a demon (see B. Janowski in Van der Toorn, Becking and Van der Horst, 1995, *s.v.* Azazel). Belzebut will probably be a variant form of Baal Zebub (see W. Herrmann in *ibid.*, *s.v.* Baal Zebub). In the Vulgate the name is spelled Beelzebub and in one instance Beelzebul. In the OT it is the name of a Semitic God (IV Rg 1:2, 3, 6, 16). In the NT Beelzebul is the Devil; he is called 'Prince of the demons' (Mt 9:34[658]; 12:24; Mc 3:22; Lc 11:15). The name Beelzebub also occurs without this title (Mt 10:25, 12:27; Lc 11: 18-19). According to the synoptic gospels, Beelzebub is thus the same as Satan. Beelzebut in Red. IX is, therefore, not just *a* devil/demon but *the* Devil/Demon[659].

The name Parthemon and its variant forms is not so easy to explain on the basis of biblical and non-canonical texts. However, a Middle Irish text

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[657] One could add the name Leviathan, given to the Devil in NBA, but there is no description of the Devil as Beast in this text.

[658] In Mt 9:34 some manuscripts read: 'the Prince of the demons'; others read: 'Beelzebub' or 'Beelzebul'.

[659] For other names of the Devil, see G.J. Riley in Van der Toorn, Becking and Van der Horst (1995, *s.v.* Devil).

throws light upon the name: *Duan in choícat cest*, 'The Poem of the Fifty Questions' (the text was first edited by Meyer, 1903b, pp. 234-7, but I quote from Wright's book as he is using two manuscripts instead of one):

"Cía delb i fil Lucifer?	"What is Lucifer's shape?
.i. delb pésti	That is, the shape of a beast
dianad ainm Prothimeon	whose name is Prothimeon,
.i. cét cenn fuirri	that is a hundred heads upon it
7 cét dant cách cinn.	and a hundred teeth in each head.
[.i. delb na biasda	[That is, the shape of a beast
dianad ainm Parthameth	whose name is Parthameth,
7 cét cenn fuirri 7	and a hundred heads upon him and
cét tengadh gacha[660] cind	a hundred tongues in each head
7 cét sul]"	and a hundred eyes]"
(Wright, 1993, p. 165)	(*ibid.*, n. 204[661]).

It should be noted that only the question is part of the poem. The answers are given in glosses. In the two manuscripts the Beast has a hundred heads, just as it does in SLB and Redactions I, Br, VII and VIII. Its 10,000 teeth are also present in Redactions I, Br and VIII and 1,000 eyes are mentioned in Redactions IIIa-c and IIIe. The Redactions do not refer to the tongue of the Dragon, but the tongue of the Demon Belzebut is like a sharp sword. This is, of course, different from the motif of multiple tongues as given in the Middle Irish poem. The beast is not a dragon in this text and it receives new variant forms of its name. It is not equated with Lucifer, but its shape is compared with Lucifer's shape. However, since more may be intended by this comparison I will now advert to Lucifer[662].

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[660] Wright (1993, p. 165) has "*gach a cind*" and translates (*ibid.*, n. 204): 'a hundred tongues in each of his heads'.

[661] In this footnote Wright adds that he is preparing a new edition in cooperation with F. Biggs.

[662] Wright, who also identifies the Beast as Satan or Lucifer, goes into the sources of the detail of the many heads. First he mentions monsters from classical texts with many heads (1993, p. 158) such as Cerberus, the Hound of Hell; the Hydra and the Dragon of the Hesperides. He points out that Parthemon is never said to have seven heads and concludes that this feature echoes classical rather than biblical influence (*ibid.*). He then adds that the many heads could also derive from Irish tradition (*ibid.*), but the texts that he suggests (*ibid.*, pp. 162-3) are later than the Middle Irish texts which give the Monster of Hell, of which he sees Parthemon as the 'ultimate progenitor' (*ibid.*, p. 165). The texts he proposes as sources are the later version of EFmL of the 13th or 14th century (see note 50 above); a poem in the *dindśenchas* (contemporary with the Middle Irish 'Monster of Hell' texts); a *Life* of Colmán Elo ("a compilation, made in the later middle ages"; Kenney, 1929/79, p. 400) and a *Life* of Abbán ("a late Irish translation" of a Latin *Life* of the 12th or 13th century; *ibid.*, p. 319). The classical texts are, therefore, much more likely as sources for the Redactions than these Irish texts. The biblical infuence should not be ruled out either. Wright (1993, p. 157) refers

Is 14 in the Hebrew Bible gives a speech addressed to the king of Babylon. This king wanted to ascend to Heaven above the stars and the clouds. He wished to set his throne on high and sit on the mount of assembly. He desired to make himself like the Most High (Is 14:13-14). Instead he is brought down to Sheol, to the depths of the Pit (Is 14:15). In verse twelve he is addressed as the Day Star, son of Dawn. Another important text is to be found in Ez 28, and concerns a speech to the king of Tyre. This text relates that the king of Tyre was in Eden, the garden of God (Ez 28:13), but he was thrown down from the mountain of God to the ground (Ez 28:16-17). These texts have been connected in later traditions with the theme of the fall of one of the archangels (see G.J. Riley in Van der Toorn, Becking and Van der Horst, 1995, *s.v.* Devil). For instance, there is an archangel who has the same desires as the king mentioned in Is 14 and who is thrown down from Heaven by God on the second day of the Creation (II En 29:4-5).

These ideas are important in connection with Lucifer. For the Vulgate translates Is 14:12 as follows: "*quomodo cecidisti de caelo lucifer* (...)*"*, 'How you have fallen down from Heaven, o Lucifer (...)'. Jeffrey Burton Russell points out:

> "The equation of Lucifer, "the lightbearer," with Satan is not clear in the New Testament. Although the Septuagint had translated the "bright morning star" that fell in Isaiah 14 as *heosphoros* ("dawn-bringer"), which also became *phosphoros* ("light-bearer"), or *lucifer* in Latin, and although the fallen angels are likened to fallen stars in Revelation 12.4, the term "bearer of light" in the New Testament is reserved to Christ. The earliest Christian text making the equation of Lucifer with Satan is *Against Marcion* (2.10) by Tertullian (c. 170—220). Nonetheless, the assumption was common in the Apocalyptic writings, and Jesus' statement in Luke 10.18 (...) indicates that the earliest Christians shared it" (Russell, 1989, pp. 43-4).

In the Vulgate Lucifer falls thus to the earth (Is 14:12) and is brought down to Hell, to the bottom of the Pit (Is 14:15, 19). The fallen archangel is identified as Lucifer. As Russell observes, this theme of the fallen archangel is also present in Lc 10:18, where Jesus says that he saw Satan fall from Heaven like lightning. Satan is, moreover, said to be thrown with his angels from Heaven to the earth in Apc 12:9, which verse identifies Satan as the old serpent and the great dragon. This completes the circle: the dragon Parthemon is a form of Lucifer. Lucifer is Satan. Satan is Beelzebul and also the dragon from the Apc. Lucifer is also known in Irish texts, as is obvious from the texts described above. For instance, in FA the

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to the dragon in the Apc that has seven heads and therefore more or less dismisses the Bible as a source of influence, but it should be noted that Ps 73:14 speaks of the heads of Leviathan/the dragon in the sea without mentioning their number.

soul is delivered into the hand of Lucifer and is thrown into the mouth of the Devil. SnR refers to the Monster of Hell, the King of Hell and Hell the prison for Lucifer[663].

Parthemon is thus another form of the Evil One, but this is not yet an explanation of the origin of the name of the dragon. James (1893, p. 8) is of the opinion that "the fiery dragon's name, which appears in various copies and versions as Bachimach, Parthemon, Partimor, Patinot, is doubtless Behemoth". More information about this would have been welcome, but this is all he says. In 1.3.2 I referred to texts that equate Leviathan with the Devil (NBA and a poem by Blathmac, in which the Devil is also called Lucifer[664]); the same happens to Behemoth in medieval times as one can read in, for instance, the *Catechesis Celtica*, a homiletic collection perhaps from the 9th century (Wilmart, 1933, pp. 29-112; see p. 107). If it is the case that Behemoth has lead to Parthemon, then this might be another example of the Christian usage of ascribing the names of monsters and demons to the Devil.

Silverstein (1935, p. 66) quite rightly characterises Parthemon as a synthetic creature (for its aspects that have come from several sources, see *ibid.*, pp. 66-9). He (*ibid.*, p. 68) points out that the special class of sinners (princes and satraps) that is mentioned in the Redactions in this context have sinned by pride (*superbia*), which can be symbolised by a great beast in Jewish and Christian texts. He refers to the influence of ideas about Satan, Leviathan and Behemoth from the Bible. In the *Book of Job* (Iob 40:18) Behemoth is always thirsty for the waters of the Jordan, and Gregory the Great (in *Moralia in Iob* XXXIII, §13; edition: Adriaen, 1979-85) compares this with the insatiable hunger of the Devil (see Silverstein, 1935, p. 68). The always open mouths of Parthemon could be seen as another expression of this. Silverstein, however, does not believe that the name Parthemon derives from Behemoth. He suggest the Hebrew פרתמים, 'princes', occurring in Dn 1:3; Est 1:3; 6:9, and translated in the Vulgate by 'tyrants' (*ibid.*, p. 69). As has been pointed out in this study on several occasions, there is a connection between monsters and hostile foreign rulers in biblical symbolism. Moreover, ideas about pride as evil/sin played a role in Jerome's translation of the dragon/sea monster Rahab — perhaps also influenced by the last sentence of the speech in the *Book of Job* about Leviathan, who is king over all the children of pride (cp. 2.3.2.1; see also Kiessling, 1970[665]). Therefore, this interpretation of Silverstein seems to be more convincing than James's suggestion,

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[663] I leave the motif of Satan bound in Hell aside, as it is not connected with the bestial monsters central here.

[664] Leviathan is also given as a name of the Devil by Jerome, when he refers to the many names of Satan (*Epistula* 21, 11; Labourt, 1949, pp. 91-2).

[665] In *Catechesis Celtica*, immediately after the spiritual explanation of Behemoth as the Devil, it is said that Behemoth is immoderate pride. Somewhat further Behemoth is said not only to devour the unjust people but also to desire to drink the Jordan, which in the text allegorically is explained as the faithful (Wilmart, 1933, p. 107).

although the two explanations are interrelated. To conclude with Silverstein's words:

> "As the designation of the dragon who devours the wicked rulers in Hell, the term Partemim, Phorthomin, Porthomin, signifying tyrants, would form the basis for an unusual and highly appropriate name" (*ibid.*, p. 69).

To this observation I add that the motif of tyrants being devoured by a dragon called 'Tyrants' could be viewed as another example of the idea of the correspondence between sin and punishment.

After this exposition about infernal beasts one can conclude that the most probable interpretation of the five monsters in Hell from EÍ are the infernal locusts from the *Apocalypse of John*. The latter are likewise a divine punishment residing in the Pit of the Abyss, kept there by God until the time has come for them to punish the people. Their advent is announced by the fifth trumpet, and the fifth angel of the Abyss will open the Pit. These large and horrible beasts will torment the people for five months. The repetitive use of the number five may be why EÍ mentions five monsters. The other texts that also mention this divine punishment and, moreover, make them into a Sunday sanction, are three Latin Sunday Letters and one Old English homily. Two of the Latin texts (M2 and Tou) describe the monsters as having 'never been seen before', and one of these Letters (Eustace's copy) portrays what is obviously a variant version of the infernal locusts from the Apc. These three Letters mention furthermore other apocalyptic signs in the context of these monsters. Both the Latin and the Old English Sunday texts refer to the monsters as beasts (*bestiae* and *déor*). Hom. B also mentions the number five, makes them arise from the sea and describes the event as something that has taken place in the past. Hom. G, which is a sermon not about Sunday but about the Antichrist, gives a description of the locusts from the Apc, calling them 'beasts' as well. These great, horrible beasts will come from Hell, have never been seen before and will stay on earth for five months.

The five beasts also share some characteristics with the four monsters from Daniel's nocturnal vision and the beast rising from the sea/Abyss in the Apc, but the cumulative evidence of the texts that point to the infernal locusts make the latter more eligible as an identification for the five Irish beasts than the former.

Another line in this section, which was detected in non-canonical, Hiberno-Latin and Middle Irish texts in particular, is 'the entrance to Hell'. This consists of three motifs distributed across several texts: first, twelve dragons; second, the bridge episode; and third, the Beast of Hell. Before the soul enters Hell it is swallowed by twelve dragons (FA, (Hib?-) Latin homily?) or the soul is enclosed by a dragon whose body has twelve chambers of punishment (PS). Souls have to walk over a bridge: the just can cross unharmed, the unjust fall into a fiery/horrible river/valley with fiery/diabolical beasts in it that devour them (VisEz, Redactions of ApcPa,

FA). In Hell the sinful souls are swallowed/inhaled/exhaled by a huge (many-headed) Monster, or they are forced to be in its presence (III Bar, ApcAb, VisEz, ATh, Redactions of ApcPa, ICUC, SLB, SnR, the LFF text, FA). This Monster is either Hades/Hell (III Bar, ApcAb, ATh) or the Devil (ApcAb, Redactions of ApcPa, ICUC, SLB, SnR, the LFF text, FA).

3.3.3 The monsters' relation to evil

The message of the Irish Sunday Letter is clear: performing evil brings about evil. Performing evil is defined in this text mainly as not observing Sunday, and the creatures that perform this evil are human beings. In EÍ the evil brought about is indicated in a general and specific way: the general evil is indicated as all plagues and sufferings; the specific forms of evil are the punishments by monsters, disastrous weather phenomena including sulphurous fire and a shower of fire, and foreign enemies. God and/or Jesus Christ are the ones who ensure that, when the first kind of evil is performed, the second kind follows as a sanction. The first kind of evil is moral evil: the sin of not observing Sunday. The second kind of evil is non-moral evil. The occurrence of non-moral evil — the destruction of the crops by bad weather and/or beasts, illnesses and other kinds of disaster[666] — can be interpreted as 'bad luck', but when bad acts by people are connected with the disaster as cause and effect the disaster is no longer seen as meaningless misfortune. Non-moral evil (harm done by monsters) is thus linked with moral evil (Sunday transgressions): sins are punished and disasters are caused by one's own faults.

Among the punishments enumerated in EÍ are the monsters. They would appear to have two dimensions: one side of them seems to be 'natural': hordes of locusts destroying the lands are part of the plagues affecting rural life. Their other side is 'supernatural': the *brucha* and locusts from EÍ were shown to have some characteristics which can be traced to apocalyptic texts, with the flying serpents, infernal horse and five hellish monsters likewise connected with apocalyptic texts. These two sides of the beasts are parallelled in the locations — both on earth and in Hell — where non-moral evil strikes as the punishment for moral evil. Performing evil brings about evil both during and after life.

I will first advert to the punishments by monsters during life and then to the after-life dimension. Some of the beasts mentioned in the Irish and

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[666] Even invasion by foreign armies may have the character of non-moral evil in this line of reasoning: it is not their desire for riches and territory that is given as the reason for their evil-doing, but their coming is caused by God, who sends them. This classification of evil is difficult to grasp from a modern point of view, in which war and raids are obviously characterised as moral evil. But for farming people whose lands are empty and bare after an invasion, it makes little difference whether this is done by hordes of foreigners or of locusts. The point is not that these armies are willingly doing harm, but that God punishes the moral evil done by the victims of the armies.

Latin Sunday Letters and in the Old English sermons could be characterised as the natural enemies of rural life: locusts, beetles, other vermin and wolves/dogs. These punishments seem, therefore, to be aimed at a rural population. This is quite understandable: they will be the main offenders against the command as much of their work cannot be postponed to the next day. For instance, the cows have to be milked and the harvest must be gathered, whether it is Sunday or not. Writing about the Latin Sunday Letters, Delehaye (1928, p. 167) also suggests the rural population as the main victims of the punishments. He regards analysis of the punishment details as unnecessary because the ideas follow each other without order or end. In his eyes this is the characteristic incoherence of popular literature. One could object to this from a general point of view: Vladimir Propp (1968/73[667]) and Claude Lévi-Strauss (1972; 1975), for instance, have shown patterns and structure in popular ideas and tales. Moreover, from a specific perspective based on the punishments in the Latin, Irish and Old English Sunday texts I hope to have shown above that there is a structure to be found in these sanctions, for which older sources have been used. I believe that the Sunday Letter shows no mere accumulation of disasters but a pattern in which one can detect the tradition of divine wrath from biblical and non-canonical texts, where the rules given by God are sanctioned by divine punishments.

The eschatological dimension to the punishments is closely related to the concept of God as the ruler of everything. God is legislator and judge. The laws of God have to be obeyed; in the case of disobedience, God also sees to it that this is punished. God uses the whole of creation, including the monsters, as instruments to impose the sanctions. The punishing reflects God's function as a judge. This function reaches a climax at the Day of Judgment, which is the End. The 'eschaton' has a twofold meaning, both individual and general. Death is the end of one's life, after which the sinner can expect punishment in Hell. The fiery horse is an example of this eschatological idea of the individual's end. But there is also the End of Time — the general end — when the Day of Judgment will occur, preceded by apocalyptic phenomena. The flying snakes that accompany supernaturally bad weather and foreign enemies could, to a degree, be classified as such. The divine punishments from the OT were of influence upon apocalyptic and eschatological punishments, as is evident in the case of the locusts. Evil will, in those days, come on earth from Hell. The five monsters represent this line of thought.

The five monsters in Hell are somewhat more complex than the other monsters in EÍ. The fact that the text says that they want to harm the people makes them eligible as creatures that wish to perform moral evil, which is harm willingly done. On the other hand, the evil they want to do should be explained as a divine punishment, with God as the commanding force who sends or (in this case) keeps them back until the time is right. In this way, the five monsters are in line with the other monsters that have

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[667] The Russian original of *Morphology of the Folktale* was completed in 1928.

been or will be sent as a divine punishment. The five monsters are only instruments, and their eagerness to punish people may be a sign of them being servants of God.

The case is different for the personification of moral evil, the Evil One, who is an opponent of God. He is also present in EÍ: in the *Dignatio diei Dominici* (§15). One of the miracles on Sunday is the victory of the Son of God over his Enemy (*náma(e)*) on 15 February[668]. This is the only place where the Devil is mentioned in EÍ. In 3.3.2.1 I pointed out some parallels between the *bruch* and a devil in PB and PP: the fiery eyes and the prickles/bristles which are part of the wings of the devil and form the hair of the *bruch*. Moreover, the devil's prickly wings in PB are compared with a porcupine. The *bruch* shares a characteristic with the hedgehog, which the *Physiologus* explains as the Devil (the most vile spirit in version Y and the prickly Devil in version B). But although the hedgehog is connected with the Devil, this cannot be said of the *bruch*. The moralistic interpretation of the *Physiologus* cannot be found in the Old Irish text. Neither is it present in the (Hiberno?-)Latin gloss on Ps 103:18, which gives a description of the hedgehog similar to that in the *Physiologus*. The *brucha* in EÍ bring about evil but they are not connected with the Evil One, the Enemy.

The Devil as a monster is found in AP and the (Hiberno?-)Latin homily, in both of which he is portrayed as the old dragon. This is to be traced to the dragon in the Apc in the Bible. In NBA the Devil receives the name of the biblical monster Leviathan, but there is no evidence that he himself was seen as a monster.

The Devil in the form of a monster is not found in an Old Irish text. The texts that describe the Monster of Hell are Middle Irish, as was shown in 3.3.2.5. This portrayal is thus a later development: it is not taken over as such from the Bible. The Monster of Hell should probably be traced to the Redactions of ApcPa (which in their turn may partly have been influenced by the mention of the heads of Leviathan/the dragon in the sea in the *Psalms*). The Middle Irish texts under discussion show a climax of evil in this context. The Devil/Monster is an evil Lord (ICUC). He is the King of Evil. Besides every other evil there is the Monster of Hell. He incites all evil (SLB); he is the King of Hell (SnR). In the presence of the Devil the soul receives 'the plenitude of all evil' forever (FA). In this way the Enemy is portrayed as an evil monster. All kinds of evil can be found in the context of this personification of moral evil: he makes people do evil

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[668] One manuscript reads *diabul*, 'Devil', and another gives April instead of February (O'Keeffe, 1905, p. 200). This miracle refers to Jesus's fast in the desert when he was tempted by the Devil, as described in the synoptic gospels (Mt 4; Mc 1; Lc 4). (See also notes 400 and 579.) This feat and date occur in FO as well. Marc Schneiders (1988, p. 295) points out (referring to Gougaud) that the victory of Jesus over the Devil after his fast was celebrated liturgically in the early ninth century. This feast may originally have marked the beginning of Lent (*ibid.*, p. 297).

(sin), for which they are punished by evil (pain and all kinds of horrible torment).

The Devil is given the shape of a dragon in the Apc and in most of the Redactions of ApcPa, which are probably the sources of the Hiberno-Latin and the Middle Irish texts respectively. This dragon (*draco*) is still found in the Hiberno-Latin texts, but the Middle Irish texts have replaced the specific term by a more general one: instead of a dragon they refer to a monster (*bíast*). It may very well be that the choice of a dragon in the Redactions of ApcPa should also be traced to the Apc, although the dragon in the sea from the *Psalms* may have been of influence as well. The importance of the Apc for the portrayal of evil is now obvious. It is interesting to note that the Apc is also mentioned in EÍ as one of the Sunday miracles (§15). On Sunday, John the son of Zebedee saw the wonderful vision (*aislinge*) and the heavenly vision (*fís*): the Apocalypse of the Mysteries. Above, I show this text to have been of considerable influence on the Sunday Letter, together with many other apocalypses. The genre of apocalypticism reveals divine mysteries: time is God's time and, from the beginning of time, it is known that there will be an end of time. God who conquered evil at the beginning (expelling the evil archangel from Heaven, constraining/killing monsters such as Leviathan) will at the end vanquish evil forever. The signs of the end are foretold and Heaven and Hell are shown to visionaries, often guided by an angel. Apocalyptic characteristics can also be found in the Irish Sunday Letter, in addition to the apocalyptic influence on the monsters: angels bring the Letter to Rome and the place where to find it in Ireland is revealed by an angelic saint in a vision/dream. Apocalyptic signs accompany the Letter's arrival on earth. A message of the *Dignatio diei Dominici* is that what happens from Creation to Eschaton is part of God's plan, which is shown by the fact that important events took place on Sunday. The earth, Heaven and the first light of day — the beginning of Time — were created on a Sunday; the Resurrection of Jesus Christ — the middle of Time — was on a Sunday (mentioned twice: §§7, 15); and the Day of Judgment — the climax and end of Time — will be on a Sunday too. This will be the end of the cosmological battle between good and evil. EÍ tells the people how they can be 'on the good side': it tells what is good and what is bad or, in other words, how the people should live. These moral prescriptions are connected with the topic of how evil is overcome, which will be dealt with below.

3.3.4 The way in which the monsters are overcome

If one obeys the rules of Sunday observance the monsters will not pose a threat. Although the danger they present is not overcome their threat is neutralised. The monsters continue to exist as part of the creation which is in God's service, or as instruments guarding God's order.

The ideas basic to EÍ are essentially biblical. The main rule set out in this heavenly document is in fact a renewal of the Sabbath commandment, now applied to the Sunday. The sanctions connected with the rule can be traced partly to the Vulgate. The whole concept of divine rules and

sanctions should be understood against the background of the idea of God's covenant with the people. God has given commandments to the people and, if they keep them, they will be blessed; if they transgress, they will be punished. God announces this blessing and curse very clearly after giving the Ten Commandments as a divine law to the people (see, for instance, Dt 28). Opposites are life/good and death/evil (Dt 30:15). Life is the same as God's blessing; death is God's curse (Dt 30:19). If people follow the heavenly prescriptions they will both lead a good life and reap the rewards.

The same message is found in the Sunday Letter. One can discern three kinds of rule in EÍ: first, about Sunday; second, about the Letter itself; and third, a kind of general rule. The Sunday rules forbid any kind of work: on the land, in the house, in assemblies of people. Neither trade nor lawsuits are to take place on the sacred day. One should neither clean oneself nor one's house or clothes. One should not take part in productive processes: no food may be produced or prepared, nor is the reproduction process allowed to take place. Any method of transport is forbidden. The rules mentioned in the law part of EÍ are more or less the same.

Considering these strict rules, it is difficult to understand how Donald Maclean can assert that the Law of Sunday (CD) had been a popular custom before its official introduction (which he dates to 886; Maclean, 1926, p. 21). This is especially so in that early Ireland was of course mainly a rural country and, as I pointed out in 3.3.3, some rural work cannot be postponed to the next day. I question, therefore, whether the rules set out in the Sunday Letter and Law could have been popular. Moreover, one could ask why such horrible threats would have been necessary if the people were satisfied with the restrictions. Certainly, Latin versions of the Letter are fairly angry in tone. Jesus is even supposed occasionally to have sent a second (M2 and Tou) or a third (V) Letter because the people had not obeyed the Letter(s) sent earlier. Therefore, even though a day of rest in the week will have been — and remains — popular, I do not believe that these strict rules and regulations will have been popular. What Maclean does is to confuse text with reality. He finds proof of the strict observance of Sunday's rules in narratives like the *Lives* of the saints and ICUC (1926, pp. 37-41). Hagiography often does not coincide with reality, however. The saints are supposed to be examples for the people: their behaviour towards Sunday shows the ideal conduct. The punishments for transgressing the Sunday rules specified in ICUC are in the same category as those given in EÍ. The threats of supernatural punishment in the Letter and the elaborate system of ecclesiastical fines in the law part of EÍ are evidence that the Sunday rules were not in fact popular[669].

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[669] Somewhat further in his monograph Maclean (1926, p. 42) points out that it is not necessary to accept or reject the "genuineness of the illustrative stories", by which he refers to the narrative texts he uses to prove that Sunday observance was popular. He bases his line of reasoning on the belief the people had in this tradition: "we are constrained to admit that the belief of the people in those

The issue of popularity leads to the second kind of rule found in EÍ and connected with the Letter itself. The clergy is addressed first: they should read the Letter out loud (§§19, 22). A more general admonition is given in the form of a blessing for those who read the Letter aloud, copy and obey it (§19). An echo of this is found in the law part: in any assembly of peoples and kings, the Law of Sunday should be passed first (§33). The Irish version does not refer to the special qualities this Letter possesses but, as I say above (3.1), other versions promise protection from harm offered by the Letter itself in its capacity as a kind of talisman — for instance in the case of childbirth or of fights. Witnesses of this talisman function have been found even in the 20th century — during the First World War German soldiers were found dead with the Letter close to their chests (Stübe, 1918, p. 1). This may have been an instance of people carrying the Letter on their person in order to be protected against weapons. The feeling of being protected by this sacred object which has come from Heaven and been written by Jesus Christ himself seems to me to have been the main reason for its popularity.

The last, more 'general', rule is the command to be merciful towards the poor, the weak and strangers/pilgrims. God protects the powerless in that evil done to them will be punished by the Divine One. God's mercy is also mentioned with regard to the fifth kind of monster: God's mercy keeps them in Hell. As can be read in the Apc, they will come out of the Pit of the Abyss at the End of Time. Even then, God will show mercy: the people who have God's sign on their heads will not be tormented by the monstrous locusts, and will receive the ultimate blessing of a continous existence in Heaven. In §15 of EÍ the people who will go to Heaven are called 'the innocent', as opposed to 'the proud ones'. God, the powerful and merciful One, will protect from evil those who do good: those who are merciful to the powerless. It seems that one has to be good on Sunday especially: neither slaves nor animals may be forced to work. On that day the evil of pain is absent from Hell too as no punishments are meted out then either.

Summary and conclusions

The Sunday rule is clearly modelled upon the Sabbath's Commandment, and the sanctions accompanying Sunday observance have their roots in the Old Testament. In the Irish Sunday Letter, five kinds of monster occur: *brucha*, locusts, fiery horses, flying serpents and five infernal monsters.

judgments for violation of the law of the Lord's day proves how high a place the sanctity of the day held in their esteem" (*ibid.*, p. 43). If the people believed the supernatural sanctions and were subject to the ecclesiastical fines, then one could also conclude that they lived in a state of terror and fear, which is something different from pious esteem for a sacred day. Perhaps some people could combine these two different kinds of feeling, but even so this would not be evidence for the popularity of the Sunday rules.

The Irish word *brucha* (plural; the singular is *bruch*) derives from the Latin *bruchus*, 'wingless locust' (the plural form is *bruchi*). The term *brucha* is not translated because these beasts have aspects that allow of the identification of two different beasts.

The *brucha* are a divine punishment for people not observing Sunday. They have iron bristles and fiery eyes. They live in the East. They destroy vineyards by cutting the branches and removing the grapes to their lairs. Their advent is described in the past tense. I have shown the *brucha* to be composite creatures consisting of characteristics connected with both wingless locusts and hedgehogs. As wingless locusts they can be traced to the divine punishments mentioned in the Bible. Locust plagues occur in several books of the Vulgate, with the best-known example one of the Ten Plagues (specified as locusts and wingless locusts in the *Psalms*). The *Book of Jeremiah* relates that the wingless locust has bristles, the *Book of Joel* that it destroys vineyards. As far as the Sunday Letter in Ireland is concerned — and Rome where the Letter originates — these punishments occurred in the East and in the past. This conforms with the description in EÍ. In canonical and non-canonical scripture iron and fire are often referred to in apocalyptic descriptions of eschatological punishments. The *brucha*'s fiery eyes have several parallels; there are none, however, for their bristles of iron. In Pliny's NH, the removal from vineyards of grapes on bristles is ascribed to hedgehogs. This motif is also found in Isidore's *Etymologiae*, the *Physiologus* and the (Hiberno?-)Latin gloss on Ps 103:18. The Irish author of EÍ might have made a reconstruction of the *bruch* on the basis of three divine punishments from the Vulgate: the *bruchi*, the *ericius*/hedgehog and the *erugo*/*eruca*/caterpillar. The Vulgate supplies the detail of the wingless locust's bristles; hedgehogs have spines and caterpillars bristly hair. The Fathers of the Church point out that the *bruchus* is a young locust. There was some knowledge of the phases of the locust as the (Hiberno?-)Latin gloss on Ps 104:34 shows, where *bruchus*, *locusta*, and *eruchus* are described. Although hedgehogs were probably unknown in Ireland at the time of EÍ, some authors must have known that hedgehogs have bristles. Texts in Irish (TBC, TBDD) give the image of men with apples on their bristly hair, but the comparison made in TBC is not with a hedgehog but with a thorn bush. The same happens to a portrayal of a devil. In the original text (PB) his prickly wings are compared with a porcupine, while in the Irish translation (PP) the wings are thorny as a briar. These adaptations were probably made for an Irish public to whom hedgehogs were unknown. In this way, the characteristic traditionally part of the description of hedgehogs may have been ascribed to a hero such as Cú Chulainn and was certainly ascribed to a monster like the *bruch*. Variant versions of the *brucha* are found in the Latin Letters and Old English homilies, in which the 'apocalyptic' characteristics of fiery eyes and iron bristles are absent. In these texts, too, the wingless locusts/beetles are a sanction connected with Sunday observance, and they are accompanied by the locusts with wings/grasshoppers. This has a parallel in EÍ, where the occurrence of the *brucha* is immediately followed by a description of locusts. In the prose SnR Red. I the *brucha* and locusts are likewise

separate plagues, but in this text they both are part of the Ten Plagues. It is evident that the author of EÍ used various sources for the portrayal of the *bruch*. This Irish version of the Sunday Letter takes details from these sources and combines them into a new monster. The combination of hedgehog with wingless locust and the aspect of iron bristles is unique to EÍ, which is why the beast has been categorised as a monster of the integrated kind.

The locusts are a divine Sunday sanction located in the East. They have iron wings. They destroy everything by pressing those wings around whatever they encounter. They also cut the ears of wheat with their iron wings. Many of the texts adduced above point to the Ten Plagues as the main source. This biblical tradition, which is also found in non-canonical scripture, the (Hiberno?-)Latin gloss on Ps 104:34, the Old English Hom. B and the prose SnR, explains the eastern origin and their function as a divine punishment. In the *Book of Joel,* the gloss and Hom. B, the wheat is explicitly mentioned as their target. The special divine punishment for Sunday transgressions has its parallel in the Latin Letters and Old English homilies. No locusts with iron wings are found in other texts. Locusts with cuirasses like iron cuirasses are given in the Apc; locusts and *bruchi* with iron claws are present in *Cosmographia.* The iron seems to be an apocalyptic characteristic, which is also my conclusion in the case of the *brucha.* I drew attention to an eschatological tradition in Irish texts where birds wound themselves by pressing their wings against their bodies. The same destructive 'pressing' is done by the locusts in EÍ which, in some manuscripts of EÍ and other texts mentioned above, are also classified as birds. The iron wings are unique; the other aspects of the locusts can be traced to various sources. This makes the locusts of EÍ monsters of the integrated kind.

The third kind of monster, the fiery horse, is a divine punishment that is closely related to the sin committed, *i.e.* the specific Sunday sin of horse riding on that sacred day. The horse with which one has sinned becomes a fiery horse in Hell on which the sinner has to ride after death. The rule of not riding may be a combination of the interdiction of transport on Sunday and of the idea that animals should also rest. The second idea is based upon the Sabbath rules in the Vulgate, where oxen, asses and beasts of burden are granted their sabbatical rest. Horses, however, are not mentioned as they are not beasts used in the fields or for transport. They are used for and symbolise war. There are both punishing and fiery horses in the Vulgate, but these are very different from the horse in EÍ: the biblical punishments do not take place in Hell nor is the punishment and fiery character of horses indicated by the fact that sitting on them hurts. The idea that sins correspond with punishments, however, can be found in the Vulgate: in the *Psalms* and in the *Book of Wisdom.* The latter book again gives the context of the Ten Plagues, and the punishments mentioned there conform to a now well-known pattern (compare 3.3.4): God's blessing is for Israel, representing the weak and oppressed party, and God's curse is for Egypt, which symbolises the powerful oppressors. The Egyptians are punished in a way which corresponds with their sins. This concept is

elaborated upon in non-canonical scripture: in apocalypses in which infernal torments are described, like for instance ApcPe, ApcPa and GrApcEz. ApcPa and its Redactions are very important, because these texts have links with the Sunday Letter. There are indications that they were known in Ireland, and two of the Redactions — VI and XI, both from 9th century manuscripts — might even be Irish. Red. VI gives a variant version of EÍ's fiery horse: people are punished in Hell commensurately with their sin. They who stole nags, beasts of burden and other four-footed animals are burning, mounted on the same beasts but which are now of copper. Since, however, no Sunday sin is mentioned in this instance and the people themselves are aflame, this is evidently a variant version. Another variant version is found in the Middle Irish ICUC where the two sins — riding on Sunday and stealing — are combined, but the emphasis is on the Sunday sin. ICUC gives thus a close parallel, as it describes a punishment corresponding with the sin that is meted out in a hellish environment: the person is seated on the fiery horse that he has stolen and ridden on Sunday. This text also gives a Sunday miracle and the motif of respite from infernal torments on Sunday, which is the climax of ApcPa. The horses mentioned in Latin Sunday Letters are completely different, representing the punishment of becoming the victim of foreign enemies. The Old English Hom. B gives a parallel of EÍ's tears of oxen and slaves who must work on Sunday by referring to the cry of four-footed animals. The motif of the tears and the cry is biblical as is the motif of sabbatical rest for slaves and animals, but again no horses are mentioned. The absence both of such horse-related rules in the Vulgate as well as of parallels in the Latin and Old English Sunday texts are arguments in favour of a classification of the fiery horse as an Irish addition to the Sunday material. This is reinforced by the possible Irish origin of Red. VI and the fact that ICUC is also Irish.

Flying serpents are the fourth kind of monster that come to punish human beings who do not observe Sunday. The serpents are in the company of horrible weather and hostile foreigners. With regard to this sanction, two different lines of punishment can be distinguished: first, the Old Testament line, in which flying serpents are a general divine punishment, often accompanied by bad weather and invasion by foreign nations; second, the non-canonical line in which infernal wingless snakes are a punishment for murder, infanticide, abortion and illicit sex. Often the motif of serpents or other beasts sucking or tearing female breasts is given. The first line is, of course, present in the Vulgate, as well as in the Latin and Old English Sunday texts. The formulation by which Latin Letters refer to winged serpents is also found in Is 14:29 in some manuscripts of the Vetus Latina. The flying serpent in the Bible is a danger of the desert, and a symbol of judgment and destruction. The Latin and Old English Sunday texts connect the (flying) serpents with the non-observance of Sunday, in some cases specified as collecting vegetables on that day. Bad weather and hostile foreign nations are usually mentioned in the same context. The non-canonical line is also present in the Latin and Old English Sunday texts. Serpents are sent to devour (female; Latin Letters) breasts, not only

because vegetables are collected but also because of the sin of sex on Sunday (Latin and Old English). Injustice is punished by serpents as well (Latin). The serpents in the Latin and Old English Sunday texts are not infernal. The texts in Irish deviate somewhat from these patterns: flying serpents mentioned in them are not a punishment. The serpents and vipers mentioned in the (Irish?) Red. XI of ApcPa are a punishment for nuns, not for infanticide or illicit sex but because they have neglected their spiritual duties and are not merciful. Neither in the supposed variant versions of the serpent/beast punishment from the non-canonical texts present in FA and TM is it a sexual sin that is punished. In these texts, spiritual parenthood which has been neglected (FA) and ignorance concerning spiritual duties (TM) are punished. This could be compared with EÍ, in which the sexual Sunday sin is mentioned, but the gender of the victims of the snakes is absent. Finally, serpents as punishment can be found in texts in Irish; they do not fly but are located in Hell, which is again in line with the non-canonical punishments. EÍ's flying serpents accord with the Vulgate and have variant versions in the Latin and Old English Sunday texts which, as these texts represent both the OT and non-canonical line, give more details. The flying snakes can be traced to the *Book of Isaiah* but in EÍ they have become a punishment for the non-observance of Sunday, hence my classification of them as integrated. It should be noted, though, that there is not much specific Irish influence to be found in the description of these beasts.

The fifth kind of monster that serves as a divine punishment for the non-observance of Sunday are the five huge, horrible monsters in the depths of Hell. They are keen to punish humanity but are kept back by God's grace. Two groups of monsters were suggested from the Vulgate: first, the four monsters from the sea in Dn and the monster from the sea/Abyss in the Apc and, second, the monstrous locusts from the Pit of the Abyss in the Apc. The first suggestion seems less probable, especially in the light of the other Sunday texts that refer to the apocalyptic locusts as a divine punishment. The locusts from the Apc will come from Hell. They are probably huge and certainly horrible. Although there are not five of them the number five is important in their description: they come when the fifth angel opens the Pit after the sound of the fifth trumpet. They stay on earth for five months. However, not all manuscripts of EÍ give the number five. The task of the monstrous locusts in the Apc is to punish people who do not have God's sign on their heads at the End of Time. This motif could very well be present in EÍ in the idea of God mercifully keeping the monsters back until their time has come. Variant versions are offered by the Latin and Old English Sunday texts. The Latin Letter of Eustace of Flay obviously describes a variant version of the monstrous locusts from the Apc and they also appear in a less clear form in the Latin Letters Tou and M2, where 'beasts' punish Sunday transgressions. In these Letters apocalyptic signs are to be found as well. There is, for instance, a reference to darkness which is also associated with the divine locust plague from the *Book of Joel*, which has in turn influenced the description of the locusts in the Apc. The Old English Hom. B also gives a variant version:

five beasts come from the sea as punishment for Sunday transgressions.
God mercifully ends this danger before humankind perishes. The Old
English Hom. G gives another description of the monstrous locusts from
the Apc, calling them large, horrible beasts. In this sermon they will come
in the time of the Antichrist. According to this sermon, this is the beast
from the sea/Abyss in the Apc. Old and Middle Irish texts do not give
variant versions of these beasts. They present another line — 'the entrance
of Hell' — in which twelve dragons, beasts under a dangerous bridge and
the Monster of Hell play a role. This line goes back to older sources. The
Monster of Hell is ultimately to be traced to the dragon of the Apc; the
five monsters from EÍ can be explained as the monstrous locusts from the
Pit described in the same biblical book. The fact that they are taken from
the Apc would argue for classification of these beasts as the 'imported'
kind. However, the way they are described in EÍ does not immediately
point to the locusts from the Apc; the identification is also made on the
basis of the Latin and Old English Sunday texts. Because they are not easy
to recognise, 'integrated' would appear to be an apter classification than
'imported'.

     Moral evil in this text is represented by the acts of humans, *i.e.* their
sins, which call for the supernatural sanctions. This is how the monsters
are connected with moral evil: they are the punishments for sin. These
punishments consist of disasters that befall to humankind. The disasters
have lost their character as being coincidental and part of Chaos because
there are 'laws' that decide when their non-moral evil strikes. Behind these
laws stands God as legislator and judge. Those who obey the rules given
by God are safe from the danger that the monsters present. The danger is
not overcome but neutralised, because it may strike whenever a trans-
gression is committed. Moreover, the last kind of monster is supposed to
come on earth in anticipation of the Day of Judgment, when God will
judge the people and reward the good and punish the evil. The personifica-
tion of moral evil, the Evil One, is also present in EÍ: he is called the
Enemy. EÍ relates that Jesus Christ conquered the Devil. This will be
repeated at the End of Time, according to the Apc, when the final battle
will be fought. The dragon, the old serpent — which is the Devil and Satan
— will be locked up in the Abyss for a thousand years (Apc 20:1-3). He
will be let loose for a short time, but then the representatives of ultimate
evil — the Devil, the beast from the Abyss/sea and the false prophet —
will be cast into the pool of fire and sulphur. Judgment will be held and
the sea, death and Hell will give up the dead that are in them, so that they
can be judged. Then Hell and death will also be thrown into the pool of
fire (Apc 20:9-14). And the sea is no more (Apc 21:1).

     This is how the Enemy meets his end in the New Testament. In the
Old Testament we can find the older, mirror image of this: the conquering
of the forces of Chaos by God. God overcomes Leviathan, the dragon/
beast of the sea, at the beginning (for instance, in the *Psalms*), and God
will do so again at the end, on the Day of God (Is 27). This is the biblical
background against which the Irish Sunday Letter should be read.

Conclusions

The theme of this study — encounters with monsters in early Irish texts — was investigated from two points of view. The first, main line of investigation was the question of how aspects of the process of Christianization were reflected in early Irish literary texts. The second, main line focussed upon the development of ideas about evil in the texts under discussion. These two lines of investigation generated two approaches: first, a study into the origin of the descriptions of the monsters and, second, an analysis — with the aid of a hypothesis — of the ideas found in three texts about this theme.

First, the broad scope of the Christianization process was narrowed down to an investigation of the origin of the monsters in the three texts that were studied. The descriptions of these monsters were compared with similar descriptions in other texts: canonical and non-canonical scripture, encyclopedic Latin works such as Pliny's *Naturalis Historia* and Isidore's *Etymologiae*, related Latin (and Old English) material, Hiberno-Latin, and Old and Middle Irish texts. This comparison was made to ascertain whether these descriptions were derived from sources and in order to rank the monsters in one of the three categories: 'native', 'imported', or 'integrated'. This was done in order to determine if and how Christian ideas influenced the symbolisation of evil in the form of monsters.

Second, in order to analyse the ideas about evil, two forms of evil were distinguished: first, non-moral evil, which is harm that occurs without anyone willingly inflicting it upon the victims. Second, moral evil was defined as harm willingly done. According to the hypothesis, the monsters are said originally to belong to the realm of non-moral evil but, under the influence of Christianity, they also begin to personify moral evil. This hypothesis was immediately modified because it gives the impression of a dichotomy in the concept of evil, whereas the two kinds of evil are in fact sometimes closely linked. Indeed, people often interpret non-moral evil and by so doing give it a place in their world view. They seek for a meaning or an explanation when evil things happen. When formulating interpretations of evil, people may establish a close connection between non-moral evil and moral evil: moral evil may cause non-moral evil. With this hypothesis and its modification as tools, the role of the monsters in texts was studied.

The huge amount of early Irish texts that describe encounters with monsters was narrowed down by classification into three groups and selection of the three texts that represent each group. The classification into three groups was based on genre and resulted in a distinction between a heroic, hagiographical and cosmological/eschatological group of texts. The

criteria used in the selection of the three texts were: 1. the texts had to
stem from the Old Irish period; 2. the monsters had to play a symbolically
important role; 3. each text had to be a good representative of its 'genre'/
group. The Old Irish *Echtra Fergusa maic Leiti* from the eighth century
represents the heroic group and describes how a heroic king faces and
fights a monster. The hagiographical Hiberno-Latin *Vita Sancti Columbae*,
which was completed by Adomnán between 697 and 704, shows the
superiority of a saint over monsters. The Old Irish *Epistil Ísu*, from the
ninth or perhaps the eighth century, presents monsters as servants of Jesus
Christ, who introduces a new order and threatens with sanctions that have
eschatological aspects.

I will keep the two main lines of approach (the search into sources and
the analysis of ideas about evil) apart in this section. I start with a brief
summary of the context and classification of each of the three representa-
tive texts together with my conclusions about the origin of the monsters in
these texts combined with my categorisation of the monsters as 'native',
'imported', or 'integrated'. I provide a summary of my findings on how
the concept of evil developed and draw my final conclusions.

Echtra Fergusa maic Leiti is found in the context of law texts. It is extant
in both a poetry and a prose version and is associated with a law text about
the procedure for claiming land in *Senchus Már*. The narrative is used as a
precedent or 'leading case', but it may very well also have existed indepen-
dently of the law. This is suggested by the fact that the text itself refers to
variant versions of motifs in the story. The poem is more difficult to
understand than the prose text but, if one combines it with information
contained in the latter, it does become more comprehensible. The two
versions seem to relate the same course of events. EFmL is a heroic text
and seems to belong to the genre of the *echtrai* because the oldest known
title characterises it as such. The theme of the story is the adventures of
King Fergus mac Leite. There seems to be an overlap with the genre of
aittea/aideda because the built-in title of the later version of the story uses
this key-word and the narrative indeed ends in the death of the king.

The monster encountered by the king is a *muirdris*, which is a *píast
uiscide* or a water monster. It lives in Loch Rudraige, which has been
identified as Dundrum Bay. This is a sea inlet consisting of an inner and
outer bay. The beast may have body parts like branches and bristles or
prickles, but this is speculation based upon the second part of the com-
pound: *dris*. It expands and contracts alternately. Looking at this horrible,
huge beast is dangerous. No sources could be found that were used in the
description of this monster. A remarkable parallel was found in VC where
a monster is designated *aquatilis bestia*, which has *píast uiscide* as its Irish
equivalent. The monster in VC is also horrible, but the similarity does not
go any further. The description of the *muirdris* is categorised as belonging
to the native Irish kind.

The context of *Vita Sancti Columbae* is the monastic community of
Iona: the work was written by Abbot Adomnán at the request of the
monks. VC is classified as a hagiography: Adomnán describes the life of

the saint as an example to be followed by others. Ecclesiastical politics
might also have given rise to the text. The miracles performed by Columba
are arranged not chronologically but thematically. Adomnán was inspired
by several genres: classical biography, Christian hagiography and early
Irish narratives.

Five kinds of monster are found in VC: a huge sea monster (*cetus,
monstruosum prodigium, belua*), a monstrous wild boar (*aper, ferus*), a
river monster (*aquatilis bestia, belua*), serpents (*viperae*) with three-forked
tongues, and dread-inspiring small ocean monsters (*terrores, bestiolae*).

The sea monster of marvellous and enormous size with its open mouth
showing many teeth lives in the depths of the sea and occasionally sur-
faces, rising above the water like a mountain. The beast's movements
cause high waves in the sea between Iona and Tiree. The monster can be
seen against the general biblical background of immense, monstrous
creatures of the sea. Specific biblical sea monsters — Leviathan and
Jonah's sea monster — were shown to be embedded in a complex symboli-
cal system, aspects of which could also be detected in the beast Jasconius
from the *Navigatio Sancti Brendani abbatis*. The sea monster or its belly is
connected with (the belly of) Hell, the Underworld, the Abyss, the heart of
the earth. However, there is no explixit indication of this symbolism to be
found in Adomnán's description. This does not mean that Adomnán
invented the description; some of the characteristics can be traced to
sources. Although Leviathan and the huge sea monster do not share the
symbolical dimension, they do have certain aspects in common. Leviathan
is likewise a huge sea monster that makes the sea boil; it raises itself and
displays its fearful teeth when its mouth is open. In the *Etymologiae* the
huge whale is said to cause high waves, but even more important is
Isidore's description of the sea monsters. Their immensity is compared
with that of mountains. Two sources of Isidore were shown to be relevant
too: NH and the *Hexaemeron*. Pliny refers to enormous sea monsters living
in the depths and which occasionally surface. He also points out the many
(120) teeth of one specimen which was washed ashore. The most important
text is the *Hexaemeron* by St Ambrose, who tells of the sea monsters
which are immense and as large as mountains. They live in the depths and
when they surface they can be mistaken for an island (which happened with
Jasconius). When sailors see one of these immense creatures they experi-
ence a mortal fear. This last aspect is exactly what happens in VC. The
phrase '*instar montis*' could be borrowed from the *Aeneid*, which may very
well have been known in early Ireland. This and the possible borrowing in
the case of the serpents' tongues (below) indicate that the *Aeneid* was
probably known to Adomnán. The Vulgate and the *Etymologiae* were
definitely known on Iona, NH may have been, and there is no information
as to whether the *Hexaemeron* was known. It does not seem unlikely that
these texts or some of them were used as sources for the description of the
huge sea monster in VC. However, Adomnán did not literally take over
one of these descriptions: he used them, but left out the symbolical dimen-
sion (either as the primeval Chaos monster or representing the Under-
world/Death/Hell) that is explicitly referred to by Isidore, for instance,

when he writes about Jonah's sea monster. Adomnán adapted the details for his own hagiographical purposes. The sea monster in VC is a monster of the integrated kind: imported sources were used and adapted for its description.

The monstrous wild boar lives in a wood on the Isle of Skye. It is marvellously large. While hounds pursue it the beast itself heads for the saint. Stories about extremely dangerous wild boars, sometimes in combination with the characteristic of being located in a wood and with hounds in the same context, can be found both in classical texts in Latin and Fenian literature in Middle Irish. It is quite probable that Adomnán knew classical examples of this motif. The large number of Fenian texts seems to indicate that the wild boar motif was part of traditional Irish story material. However, the way in which Adomnán tells his story deviates from the storyline in the classical and Middle Irish literary traditions. It is now no longer possible to trace whether the roots of the episode about Columba's miracle are located in either of these traditions. It is, however, evident that the heroic motif of an encounter with a monstrous wild boar has been christianised. Instead of a hero or a group of heroes it is a saint who encounters the beast. Instead of the use of weapons or any other kind of physical force, sacred gestures and words are applied in the encounter. The heroic material has, therefore, been moulded into a hagiographic model. A comparison of the hagiographic episode with heroic parallels offered an interesting image of contrasts beside the similarities. The monstrous wild boar is an example of a monster of the integrated kind. It is impossible to decide whether Adomnán adapted classical and/or native Irish traditions, but it seems likely that he did use a heroic example which he christianised.

The savage, fast water monster lives in the Ness, making this river dangerous. It has bitten a man to death and lurks in the depths. When it attacks, roars loudly as it surfaces and approaches with open mouth in order to bite its victim to death. A variant version of this story is given in the Middle Irish BCC, which in turn led to a source used by Adomnán for this episode. A similar miracle is told in the *Dialogi* written by Sulpicius Severus: a group of people halt near a river in which a swimming serpent approaches them threateningly. St Martin sends the evil beast away by uttering a sacred word. Adomnán is clearly elaborating upon this episode when he tells how St Columba expelled the dangerous beast by using a sacred gesture and sacred words. The river beast belongs, therefore, to the integrated kind of monster, as an imported source was used as basis for the description.

The serpents live on Iona and are described as having three-forked tongues and being poisonous. The motif of Columba's power over these snakes is traceable to the Bible: many instances from the Vulgate can be adduced in which God or Jesus Christ bestows the power over serpents upon the obedient. The closest parallel is the story about St Paul, who is unaffected by the poison of a snake that bites him on the island of Malta. The non-canonical *Lives of the Prophets* also describes the power of a holy man over serpents: Jeremiah's prayer expels snakes. This is somewhat different from VC, in which Columba's blessing renders serpents harmless.

The aspect of three-forked tongues has been traced to classical texts: Adomnán used works by Virgil (the *Aeneid, Georgics*) and/or Pliny's NH as sources. These two kinds of source — biblical and classical — show that the serpents are monsters of the integrated kind.

The small ocean monsters live in the ocean in the North, beyond the sphere of human exploration. They have never been seen before. Adomnán mentions but does not describe other monsters that are found in the same place. These very awful and excessively dangerous small beasts are almost unbearable, hideous, monstrous, almost indescribable and dreadful. In size they resemble frogs. With their very troublesome stings they attack the boat of Cormac and his companions and the blades of their oars. It is possible that Adomnán was inspired by descriptions of water beasts in the works of Pliny and Isidore, but this is not obvious. The location of the small sea monsters — a faraway ocean beyond the range of human exploration — bears similarity to the location of the large sea monsters as given by Ambrose: they live beyond the bounds of the known world. The description of the stings which are very troublesome (*aculeís permolestae*) could have been taken from Isidore, who relates that this kind of sting belongs to *scinifes*, one of the Ten Plagues of Egypt. Isidore in his turn borrowed the description of the stings from Eucherius of Lyon. (It is not certain whether his *Two Books of Instruction* were known on Iona.) These small beasts have never been seen before. This phrase may function to show how extraordinary the adventure of Cormac and his companions is. Details from chapter 3, however, throw a different light on the matter: the phrase indicates in that context an infernal origin of beasts, which have therefore never been seen by human beings. The fact that they are located in an ocean in the North could also refer to an infernal environment: in NBA, St Brendan and his brothers arrive in an infernal environment when they sail in the North. The beasts in the *Immram curaig Ua Corra* that are a variant version of the small beasts of VC are also living in an infernal sea. However, these characteristics are not explicit in Adomnán's text, which is why one cannot conclude that an infernal aspect is meant by the phrase 'never been seen before'. The small, monstrous ocean beasts are monsters of the integrated kind: their stings are probably based upon Isidore's description of the *scinifes* and their location may have been borrowed from St Ambrose's *Hexaemeron*.

The context of *Epistil Ísu* is formed by Christian rules which have their roots in the Old Testament. The Irish text is one of the many versions of the Sunday Letter, a text popular in a large area — from Ethiopia to Iceland — and written in many languages. The Sunday Letter was referred to for the first time in a sixth-century letter deriving from what is now Spain. The twentieth century still showed traces of it: German soldiers, killed in the First World War, were found with copies of the Sunday Letter on them. The Sunday Letter is a christianised form of the Sabbath Commandment. The Sabbath Commandment was written by God (or Moses) on stone tablets on Mount Sinai. The Sunday Letter was written by Jesus Christ in Heaven with his blood or golden letters. The Letter was brought by angels to a sacred place on earth. The content of the Letter is the

commandment to keep Sunday sacred. Obedience will be rewarded, transgression punished. The punishments receive much attention in this pseudepigraph. The text is classified as a cosmological and eschatological text: a new order is established and it is posited that this new order has a role in God's plan with Time. The Letter refers to the Creation (the beginning), the Resurrection (the middle) and Judgment (the end of Time). The Letter makes extensive use of ideas from canonical and non-canonical literature.

The monsters described in the Irish Sunday Letter are divine punishments. They serve as sanctions for those who do not keep Sunday holy. Five kinds of monster are mentioned: *brucha*, locusts, fiery horses, flying serpents, and five horrible hellish monsters.

The *brucha* with their fiery eyes have come from the East in the past to punish people for not observing Sunday. They ruin the vineyards by cutting the vines which then fall to the ground. They take the grapes away to their lairs after rolling on this fruit. The grapes stick to their hair, which has the form of iron bristles. An important part of the *brucha*'s description is traceable to biblical locust plagues, especially to the Ten Plagues as mentioned in the *Psalms*. This divine punishment took place in the past in the East (Egypt). The characteristics of fire and iron can be seen as eschatological punishment material as described in apocalyptic canonical and non-canonical texts. Furthermore, the Vulgate offers clues for the prickles of the beasts (the *Book of Jeremiah*) and for the destruction of the vineyards by the *brucha* (the *Book of Joel*). In Latin versions of the Sunday Letter and Old English sermons, wingless locusts/beetles occur as a divine punishment for the non-observance of Sunday. In these texts they are sometimes described as a punishment that took place in the East in the past. These Sunday texts, however, offer no parallels for the fiery eyes or the iron bristles, nor do they describe the ingenious action with grapes. The wingless locusts (Latin) destroy the vegetation and the beetles (Old English) destroy the forests (and take away the people's food). Sources relating to hedgehogs provide a parallel for the action of piercing grapes and their removal on beasts' backs. The hedgehog is described in this manner by Pliny, Isidore, the *Physiologus*, and a (Hiberno?-)Latin gloss on the *Psalms*. The *brucha* are thus composed mainly of details offered by imported texts. The combination of wingless locust with hedgehog is, however, unique: it only occurs in the Irish Sunday Letter. Moreover, no source was found for the aspect of the iron bristles. This kind of monster should, therefore, be categorised as belonging to the integrated kind.

The second kind of monster is locusts with iron wings from the East. They press their wings around everything that comes in their way. In particular, they go into the wheat and cut the ears, which fall to the ground. The locusts should also be seen against a biblical background of divine punishments, especially the locust visitation from the Ten Plagues. The Vulgate and non-canonical texts describe this eastern disaster, and wheat can be found among the destroyed targets. However, these winged creatures do not have wings of iron. A (Hiberno?-)Latin gloss on the *Psalms* also describes wheat and especially the ears as the target of locusts,

but here these beasts are said to be without wings. The same gloss ascribes fiery wings to the wingless locusts. In *Cosmographia*, locusts with and without wings have iron claws but this text is too obscure to allow any conclusions to be drawn. Iron should probably be seen as eschatological punishment material, as in the case of the *brucha*. In the *Psalms* wingless and winged locusts are mentioned together, just as in EÍ where the one kind precedes the other. The same is true of the Latin and Old English Sunday texts: the two sets of animals are usually named together (although they are called beetles and grasshoppers in the Old English sermons). The East is sometimes given as the location of the beasts and the vegetation (Latin) or the wheat (Old English) is described as their target. These beasts are not said to have iron wings, a characteristic that seems to be specifically Irish. Therefore, the locusts belong to the integrated kind of monster: they can be traced to sources, but they have an aspect which is unique and found only in the Irish Sunday Letter.

The third kind of monster is, originally, a normal animal, but a Sunday sin transforms it into a supernatural beast. If one rides on horseback on Sunday, this animal will turn into a fiery horse on which its rider must sit in Hell. The idea of punishment commensurate with the sin can be found in a nutshell in the Vulgate. It has been elaborated upon in non-canonical texts as, for instance, the *Apocalypse of Peter* and the *Apocalypse of Paul*. In these texts infernal punishments are shown to a visionary, to whom it is pointed out that these torments are in accordance with the sins committed during life on earth. Redaction VI of ApcPa gives a similar but not identical punishment: burning people sit on a copper nag, copper beasts of burden and other four-footed animals in Hell. The sin thus punished is different from the sin in EÍ: the sinners in Red. VI stole the animals involved. All the other Redactions and ApcPa itself are preoccupied with Sunday: Sunday respite from infernal torments is a central motif. Red. VI deviates from this. This text, which might be Irish, offers a variant version. Another Irish text, ICUC, combines the motifs from EÍ and Red. VI: a man rides in a fiery infernal sea on a fiery horse because he stole this beast and rode it on a Sunday. The Latin Letters and Old English sermons provide no parallels. In the Latin Letters, horses represent hostile foreign (Saracen) armies. The Old English sermons elaborate upon the biblical Sabbath Commandment, in which beasts of burden, oxen and asses are set free from work on the Sabbath. The Old English homilies refer to the cry of four-footed animals, which has a parallel in the tears of oxen and slaves in EÍ forced to work on Sunday. The horse differs: this is not found in the Vulgate as a beast set free from work on Sabbath as it generally symbolises war power. The fiery horse should be categorised as a monster of the integrated kind, but it should be noted that the Irish contribution to its creation is considerable: there are no sources in which a fiery infernal horse of this kind was found. The Irish author of EÍ based this kind of beast either upon a source now lost (perhaps a Redaction of ApcPa), or created the beast while inspired by the idea of the correspondence between sin and punishment as referred to in the Vulgate and elaborated upon in the non-canonical apocalypses. The fact that no Sunday

sins are mentioned in ApcPa or its Redactions is an argument in favour of ascribing the fiery horse to the creativity of the Irish author.

Flying serpents are the fourth kind of monster. They are accompanied by supernaturally bad weather and hostile, non-Christian peoples. Sunday transgressors fall prey to this cluster of disastrous punishments. The Bible was shown to be a probable source for this kind of monster: flying serpents are mentioned twice as a divine punishment in the *Book of Isaiah*. Moreover, the terms used in the Vetus Latina — *serpentes pennati* — bear similarity to the words used in some of the Latin Letters: *serpentes pinnati/pinnatae*. Extraordinarily bad weather and invasions by foreign nations who take away the people into exile are included among the biblical divine punishments. The flying serpents should therefore be seen against the background of the general biblical idea found mainly in the Old Testament: God's curse on the transgressors of God's commandments and God's blessing for those who obey. This 'Old Testament line' is also found in the Latin and Old English Sunday texts, where the serpents are sometimes said to fly and in which foreign enemies and bad weather can often be found too. These texts also present another motif: serpents (or beasts) that threaten to devour or suck human breasts. In the Old English sermons the gender of the victims is not named; in the Latin Sunday texts the victims are women. The serpents punish Sunday sins, which are sometimes specified as gathering vegetables or having sex on Sunday. This motif of the torture of breasts was traced to non-canonical texts such as ApcPe, ApcPa, GrApcEz, VisEz and the Ethiopic ApcVirg. The serpents (or beasts) that serve as a divine punishment in these texts are not winged, but they are infernal. The sins that they punish are mainly abortion, infanticide and/or illicit sex. The correspondence of sin and punishment is to be detected here too: women who begrudged the milk of their breasts to children during life are tormented by serpents/beasts that devour or suck their breasts in Hell. In the Latin and Old English texts this idea can be found in the motif of children being born with an ailment as a result of their parents having had sex on Sunday night. This 'non-canonical line' is also present in Irish texts: nuns (the possibly Irish Red. XI of ApcPa) and clerics (FA, TM) undergo a variant version of this kind of punishment. Their sin, however, is not sexual: the nuns did not perform their spiritual duties and the clerics were either negligent (FA) or ignorant (TM) of their spiritual duties. In EÍ the serpents are neither connected with a sexual sin, nor is the gender of their victims named. The flying serpents belong to the integrated kind of monster: they can be traced to divine punishments as described in the OT. Had they been described in the same way as the flying serpents in the *Book of Isaiah* categorisation as the imported kind would have been conceivable, but EÍ describes them in terms more general than the dangers of the desert or the symbols of judgment and destruction given in the biblical text. The punishment by flying serpents is, moreover, applied to Sunday sins.

The fifth kind of monster lurks in the depths of Hell. These are five huge, horrible monsters that desire to go to the earth to punish Sunday transgressors. They are incapable of leaving Hell, however, because God's

mercy towards humanity keeps them in their place. Although these mon-
sters do not at first sight appear to have anything to do with locusts, the
study of several texts showed that they can be identified as a later develop-
ment of the monstrous locusts from the *Apocalypse of John*. When the fifth
trumpet has sounded, the fifth angel will open the Pit of the Abyss. Smoke
will rise up and darken the sun and the air. The locusts that come from the
Pit will be on earth for five months and punish the people who do not have
the sign of God on their forehead. The locusts are horrible and they might
be as large as horses. All this will happen at the End of Time, which may
be reflected in EÍ in the phrase that they are still withheld in Hell thanks to
the mercy of God. In some Latin Letters, beasts that have never been seen
before are mentioned. In the same context, apocalyptic signs such as
darkness and loud wailing are described. One Latin Letter adds characteris-
tics that render it obvious that these beasts are variant versions of the
locusts from the Apc. The Old English sermon B, which gives parallels of
four of the five kinds of monster from EÍ, describes a close parallel in this
case too. In the past, five beasts have risen from the sea and punished the
people because they did not observe Sunday. When they threatened to
make humankind perish, God mercifully put an end to this punishment.
Another Old English sermon, not about Sunday but concerning the
Antichrist, mentions horrible, great beasts which will come from Hell to
earth to punish the people at the time of the Antichrist. The description
offered here is an elaboration upon that of the monstrous locusts in the
Apc. Moreover, it shares characteristics with the related beasts in the Latin
Letters and with EÍ's five monsters. The five hellish monsters are, there-
fore, monsters of the integrated kind: they can be traced back to the
monstrous locusts from the Apc but are not borrowed unchanged: some
details were added and others omitted in their description. The exact
development of the locusts from the Apc to the monsters in EÍ is now no
longer traceable: Sunday texts that are now lost may have played a role.

There is thus in these three texts only one native Irish monster: the
muirdris, which plays a role in the heroic text. The patterns in EFmL are
therefore highly important to the comparison with the other two texts, VC
and EÍ, which are immersed in Christian ideas. The comparison of the
three texts focussed on the two kinds of evil (non-moral and moral) lead to
the following conclusions about how the concept of evil is given shape in
these texts from three different genres.

The *muirdris* is characterised as a representation of non-moral evil. I
suggested that it might be a personification of the dangerous movement of
water. The monster is located both within and without the human order.
On the one hand it lives in Loch Rudraige, which is part of the realm of
King Fergus mac Leite. This loch is, moreover, named after an ancestor of
Fergus. On the other hand, Fergus is under the inderdiction of not entering
this particular water, which makes it a place outside the human sphere of
influence. The interdiction is characterised as a *geis*; it is expressed by
little creatures associated with water, who may be considered as represen-
tatives of the Other Reality and who have extraordinary knowledge. The

non-moral evil (the danger present in the water) is closely connected with moral evil. King Fergus breaks his *geis* (he goes into the forbidden water) and transgresses the rules connected with sacral kingship. The blemish on his face, caused by the shock of seeing the *muirdris* for the first time, can be seen as a sign that Fergus is no longer fit to be king. A king does not flee in the face of danger, but fights. The truth about the blemish is first announced by a male servant, his charioteer, but this is overruled by the elite of the society. The first confrontation with the monster causes chaos: the social and sacral structure of society is out of balance. This disruption of the order activates Fate, which works both according to its own laws and as a capricious force. Fate will restore the balance but it is not known either when or how. In this case it takes some time (three or seven years) before Fate 'strikes'. When it is pointed out for the second time that the king is no longer a true king because he 'has lost his face', this is done by a person of even lower status than the charioteer: a foreign female slave. She could be considered as an instrument of Fate, just like the monster. The monster causes a visible sign on the king's face, which is evidence of his transgression; the slave speaks the truth in Fergus's face while everybody involved is silent and chooses not to see the truth (the elite) or is kept silent by being prevented from seeing the truth (the lower classes and the king himself). Fate catches up with Fergus. The second confrontation with the monster takes place and three deaths are connected with it: those of the slave, the monster and the king. Despite this tragedy the balance has now been restored: the king whose kingship was no longer based on truth/justice (*fír*, a central concept of early Irish literature) is no longer king.

The monster is killed by force and violence. The origin of this kind of evil is not explained. This makes sense in the light of my interpretation of the beast as the personification of the dangerous movement of water. This kind of evil is given with life: it is one of the dangers of nature. When nature is considered to be the creation of a good and personal God, the origin of this kind of evil is a pressing problem: why did this God create such a dangerous world? There is a need to find a reason or explanation for these existential facts. When there is no such belief in a good, personal God who has created a dangerous natural world, the problem of explaining the origin of this kind of evil is less urgent. Whether or not there is belief in a personal God, there are powers of Chaos over which we have no power but to which we are subject. One can try to formulate sacred rules in order to attempt to come to terms with these chaotic forces that threaten life. In the case of EFmL this is done when the *geis* is imposed upon the king. There are dangers in life that can be avoided if one knows where they are located. Perhaps the choice of Loch Rudraige as the place of action is meaningful: it could incorporate a message connected with the past. The water is named after Fergus's ancestor, who drowned in water. (According to a later version, Fergus also drowns in the water.) Another possibility is that it contains a message about the place of humankind in the cosmos. The water is located in the kingdom of Fergus but that does not mean that it is within his power. There are limits to human power; there

are dangers in the face of which we find ourselves with empty hands and powerless. With sword in hand, however, Fergus heroically puts an end to the monster's life. The water is still there, albeit red from the blood of the victims of the fight. The danger that the monster personifies is not over; it would stop being a danger only if the water were to be removed. But without water, life is impossible. This is an instance of the ambivalent character of water, and in a broader sense also of nature: it is both life-giving and death-bringing. The ambivalent character of water was shown to be a thread in the narrative about the king: first he is threatened with drowning by the little 'water creatures' who want to kidnap him and remove his sword. Then they give him the charm with which he can travel under water. When he finally enters the only loch that he is not permitted to enter, the shadow of Fate falls upon his face. In the end, he meets his end in the forbidden water.

The monsters in VC represent non-moral evil. They could be viewed as extrapolations of dangers encountered in nature: in water and on land. They serve as instruments to show the superiority and sacredness of Columba and of what he represents, *i.e.* the God of the new religion. The non-moral evil that the monsters represent is framed in lessons about moral good and evil. Faith, trust, obedience and solidarity are the moral good pointed out in the episodes; disobedience and disbelief are morally wrong. Moral evil is also described in other episodes of the *Life* that do not deal with monsters. This kind of evil is often ascribed to druids, robbers and other evil-doers. They are said to be inspired by the personification(s) of moral evil: the Devil and/or demons. The non-moral evil of illnesses is likewise ascribed to the Devil and demons. The monsters are, however, never sent by the Evil One. Adomnán says of the evil caused by the demonic powers that this is done with God's permission. There is no extreme dualism: God remains the ruler and most powerful one in the Creation. This view of power shows the way out of all the dangers that life presents: God is the one who will help if one trusts, believes and obeys.

This message of divine help against the dangers in life is connected with one of the aims of hagiography: presenting an example of how to live. Therefore, if one is faced with a monster one should make sacred gestures, such as the sign of the cross, and utter sacred words, such as invoking God's name, praying and giving a command. However, the ability to do this requires holy calmness and perfect faith. Not everyone has this. This is why the *Life* also gives examples of saintly help: one should follow the advice of the saint, as shown in the episode about the monks and the huge sea monster. If one is in the presence of a saint one can be assured of the protection offered by the holy one, as experienced by the monk in the episode about the river monster. But even if the saint is not present help may be given, as happens to the voyagers in the episode about the small ocean monsters. Most of the dangers presented by the monsters have not been ended: they are part of the dangers of life or of the Creation. A great danger should sometimes be avoided (the first encounter with the large sea monster). Another form of saintly help is to adopt a saintly attitude oneself: faith in Christ, calmness and sacred gestures (the second encounter

with the huge sea monster), or obeying Christ's commandments (the snakes). Only in the case of the wild boar is the danger ended: the beast is killed by the saint. This is done not by force and violence but by sacred gestures and words. The reason for the death of the wild boar may be a native Irish way of viewing honour. The boar attacks Columba himself, who is under the protection of God. This is a violation of the honour of God, which is severely punished. The general line in the *Life* is that Columba is on the side of the life-giving forces while evil-doers and demons side with death. In the case of grave injustice or harm, however, the saint condemns to death and Hell the ones who are responsible. The wild boar episode could therefore be an example intended to show that saints should be treated with the highest respect.

The monsters in EÍ represent non-moral evil. They are instruments of God, used by God to guard God's order. They have a double nature: on one level they represent natural disasters, on another supernatural catastrophes that were classified as apocalyptic and eschatological. The line of reasoning in EÍ is that doing moral evil causes non-moral evil. Moral evil is exemplified as not observing the divine commandments, especially not observing Sunday. Non-moral evil is disasters taking place in the world, like the destruction caused by monsters. God imposes the commandments and decides as a judge about the rewards and punishments. In EÍ moral evil is sin committed by human beings, who are therefore the cause of non-moral evil. All plagues and sufferings are in the world because humans do not observe Sunday. The monsters are a specific form of these disasters. They are not connected with the Devil, whom EÍ calls the Enemy and who has been conquered by Jesus Christ. This is to be seen in the context of the cosmological and eschatological combat between the forces of evil and good respectively. The result of this combat is obvious, and EÍ admonishes people to side with the forces of good and life by obeying the divine rules. The natural disasters such as locust plagues and extraordinarily bad weather mentioned in the Letter are not classified as bad luck or meaningless misfortune: these are threats and punishments caused by bad human behaviour.

The supernatural aspects of the punishments refer to God's plan with Time. Metaphysical ideas about the concept of time developed gradually in Christianity, and OT themes of the cosmological and eschatological combat have received a place within them. This concept — as found in EÍ — can be summarised as follows: there are many disasters and sufferings in the world but there will be an end to this. Meanwhile, people should live well and thus cause good things to happen. They should observe Sunday and be merciful to the powerless. EÍ gives a very explicit image: transgression of the rules is immediately connected with the disasters, although God as judge and ruler is the mediator between transgression and disaster. The way things happen is not a matter of automatic cause and effect, as with the workings of Fate. The system given in EÍ offers a way out. The text supplies rules not only on how to live but also on how to behave when something has gone wrong. In the law part of the text the detailed system of fines clearly prescribes how the balance can be restored or, to use a

more Christian term, how to bring about a reconciliation. One can atone for one's sins and thus expiate the evil created by oneself. In the system of fines each transgression is accompanied by a prescription on how one can atone for the sin and bring about a reconciliation. The disturbed relationship with God is thus restored.

Non-moral evil is part of life on earth. That is simply the scheme of things. This is what can be concluded from EFmL. VC gives a similar message: the Creation has its dangerous sides. In Christianity this is explained by the story of the first sin: originally life on earth was perfect but, because of the sin committed in Paradise, evil has become part of life. Non-moral evil is again caused by moral evil. In VC moral evil is inspired by a supernatural being: the Devil. In EÍ moral evil is done by people, and there is no reference to demonic inspiration. Moral evil is not personified in EFmL; non-moral evil is natural evil, also called the forces of Chaos. The Christian texts introduce the personification of evil, in EÍ called the Enemy.

This line of development — from Chaos to Enemy — is also present in the Bible. God conquers the chaotic forces represented by the monsters and the sea in the primeval cosmological battle. The fight with Leviathan referred to in the *Psalms* and the *Book of Job* is an example of this. A later development is the story about the fallen archangel, the Devil. In the OT story about Paradise in *Genesis* the serpent who shows the way to sin is not yet connected with the Devil. This happens later: in the *Apocalypse of John* in the NT. This development in cosmology has a parallel in eschatology: in the *Book of Isaiah*, God is said to conquer Leviathan at the end of time. Leviathan is still a force of Chaos. The eschatological battle in the Apc, however, refers to the vanquishing of the dragon who is the old serpent and the Devil. The beasts that play a role in cosmology — the serpent and the dragon in the sea — have become identified with the Enemy. By the time Christianity goes to Ireland the whole concept of the story about Time is fully developed. In the beginning of Time the proud archangel falls and becomes the Devil. The serpent, as a form of the Devil or inspired by the Devil, brings about the fall of humankind, and evil and death come into the world. The tradition about the cosmological battle with the sea, Leviathan and other monsters exists side by side with the story of Paradise. Jesus Christ comes on earth in the middle of Time. He is tempted by the Devil in the desert and then conquers the Evil One. He vanquishes Death (and harrows Hell in non-canonical traditions) by his own death and resurrection. At the end of Time the final battle will be with the dragon, who is the Devil. The result will be that the Devil/dragon, Hell, Death and the sea will be no more.

The three Irish texts likewise show a development from Chaos to Enemy. The monsters represent the dangerous side of nature/the creation. In VC, moral evil is connected with the Devil; EÍ seems to suggest that the danger of the Devil is part of the past. When people do evil, they are responsible for this themselves. The monsters are not connected with the Devil, even though some of them could easily be related to the Evil One:

the sea monster, the serpents and the *bruch*. In the *Apocalypse* the serpent
is a form of the Devil and in the *Physiologus* the sea monster is explained
as the Devil. This text explains the hedgehog, too, as the Devil in terms of
the characteristic that is also ascribed to the *bruch*. The obvious moralism
of the *Physiologus* is, however, not present in the Irish texts. The
Physiologus warns the reader not to cast anchor on the Devil (portrayed as
a sea monster), because the latter will drag the sinner down to the depths
of Hell (the sea). Moreover, the reader should be vigilant against the Devil
(hedgehog) entering one's spiritual vineyard and scattering one's spiritual
fruit (grapes) on the ground. The symbolism found in Irish texts is of a
much more subtle nature than these allegorical warnings.

The Devil as a monster is found in *Altus prosator*, an early Hiberno-
Latin poem ascribed to Columba. This is an imported kind of monster: the
image of the dragon has been taken from the Apc. The Hiberno-Latin NBA
calls the Devil by the name of the sea monster Leviathan, but this is not
evidence of the Devil as a monster. The Old Irish poem of Blathmac
starting with "*A Maire*" calls the Devil Leviathan, Lucifer and the Proud
One, but does not describe him as a monster either. The texts that portray
the Devil as a monster are descriptions of Hell from the Middle Irish
period. It is only in this later period that the idea of the personification of
moral evil as a monster becomes integrated in the Irish literary tradition.

This leaves at least one matter to be discussed in this section, which
deals with the different kinds of evil. It was already hinted at in the
Introduction. Moral evil is defined as harm willingly done. When God
sends non-moral evil to the people, what else is this but harm willingly
done? Is God capable of doing moral evil? Strictly speaking this is the
case, but within a religious world view this perception is problematic for
believers. The Irish texts central to the present study offer a solution. In
VC the figure of the Devil is advanced between the people and God: harm
is caused by the Devil. God permits it but is at the same time available as
a source of help. In EÍ it is the concept of sin that is the solution: if God
strikes with punishments, this is the fault of the people themselves. Their
sins are the cause of the misery and God punishes to teach them the error
of their ways. In EFmL this problem is absent as it is not a personal God
that distributes the sanctions but the 'blind' and automatic workings of that
impersonal power called Fate, which restores the balance and 'strikes' for
that reason. In this way the responsibility lies with a humanity that com-
mits errors, just as in EÍ. In EFmL the errors are characterised as broken
tabus instead of as sins. Explicit moral judgments about what is wrong and
what is good, as found in VC and EÍ, are absent in EFmL. However, this
might be because of its genre. EFmL is a narrative; VC and EÍ bear the
strong emphasis of religious treatises.

Epilogue

It has been several years now that I have been working on the subject of monsters in early Irish texts. During this period I have often received reactions that — to put it mildly — I would describe as surprised. 'Monsters' and scholarship might at first appear to be strange companions. A few of the questions I have been asked include: "Are you studying the Loch Ness monster?"; "Do you believe in monsters?"; "Who is paying you for a subject like this?"; "And... you are studying *theology*?" This is just a modest selection.

The problem with a subject like 'monsters' is obviously the relationship with reality. We all know that monsters 'exist': we hear about them in stories; we read about them in books and sometimes even the newspapers, and we see them in movies. They are part of the human imagination and have been around since human beings started to tell stories. They figure in the mythologies of the world. They play their part in cosmologies — the myths that explain how the world came into being. One can find them in eschatologies — the traditions that relate what will happen when this world comes to an end. Monsters are the opponents of heroes in sagas and fairy tales. Monsters are encountered by saints in hagiography. In short: monsters exist in the world of the mind.

Everbody knows what monsters are. As soon as the word is uttered the mind immediately creates images that draw on the wealth of material describing these creatures. Monsters deviate from the normal. Indeed, they *are* the abnormal. They do not fit into our classification systems. They represent chaos; they are outside our order and that is precisely their function in the stories. They disrupt the order of things. They symbolise the things in life we have no control over, the things that are beyond us. We need monsters to give names to the abnormal, the deviations within life. To be more specific about what the monsters might personify, we need to analyse the texts in which they are decribed. Only then can we draw conclusions about the meaning of monsters in the texts. Those texts I have analysed in this study show that monstrous, imaginary creatures can and have been used to symbolise the dangerous side of nature: non-moral evil.

Life on earth is dangerous, and human beings have to face and come to terms with evil because it is part of their existence. On the basis of my study, I conclude that there are at least two ways in which people deal with evil. The first is to look for security and safety by formulating rules, the second is to interpret evil, *i.e.* seeking the meaning of the evil and thus giving it a place in one's world view.

The rules that are formulated pertain to both non-moral and moral evil.

Dangerous places or situations should be avoided, or one should equip oneself with the qualities needed to overcome the dangers. I gave examples of *gessi* and prophetic advice. It will now be evident that a special class of people has special knowledge of danger: druids, prophets and other people with 'inside information' about the hidden things of life. Sometimes this hidden knowledge is revealed by the 'Other Reality' directly, as in the case of the little creatures that impose the *geis* and of the Letter sent from Heaven. The search for safety sometimes leads to highly concrete objects that are felt to safeguard their owner: the charm enabling underwater travel, objects blessed by the saint, or a copy of the Letter carried on one's person. In other cases people ask the Deity or a representative such as a saint for safety, thereby adopting an attitude of faith and trust.

Rules are also formulated in order to contain moral evil. These rules may take the form of the traditions and customs of a community, or of divine commandments. They also give a feeling of safety: as long as one obeys, nothing evil will happen. Christianity offers a solution for transgressors. A saint may tell the transgressor what to do to atone for the sins or, alternatively (in the case of El), the document stating the commandment also stipulates the rules for reconciliation.

Looking at this system of rules from a modern point of view, I have the impression that this search for safety has gone awry. If I consider the Sunday commandment I concede that periods of rest are good for people, but the detailed system of rules about what is and is not allowed on Sunday has degenerated into an absurd exaggeration. This is even more so in the case of the descriptions of infernal torments. These were written to prevent moral evil. Trying to put an end to crimes and cruelty is a good thing, but doing so by arousing mortal fear entails creating a system of psychological terror and thus creating a new kind of evil. The search for security therefore actually leads to a feeling of insecurity. Perhaps the authors despaired in the face of all the misery around them, but the cruelty of their descriptions seems to me to indicate that some of them got carried away with the infernal torments. These authors seem themselves to have been infected by evil. Perhaps they saw so much cruelty or experienced so much injustice that they became more concerned with the search for revenge than the search for good. The directive given in early Irish heroic texts is more inspiring: one has acted rightly if the outcome is good (to which I would like to add the modification that the means do not sanctify the end). We should do good not because we will be punished if we do evil, but because this improves the quality of life.

The other way of dealing with evil is to interpret it, to look for its meaning. One may feel that one has to respond to life as it unfolds: an event, a dream or other happenings may be interpreted as messages about one's life, and in this way evil can be given a meaning too. Perhaps evil is brought about by Fate or is sent by God, and in this way the Other Reality seems to address a message to the victim(s). This interpretation of evil can be made on a small scale (*i.e.* by the individual concerned) or on a large scale (by the group or community concerned). Those who see non-moral evil as caused by moral evil have an anthropocentric view of life. Even

though the course of life is ruled by a supernatural entity such as Fate or God, it is human behaviour that causes things to happen.

Making human behaviour central to the interpretation of evil has its advantages and disadvantages. If one's own behaviour is that important, the impression that one has a grip on reality is given. One can influence the course of life and therefore also the forces of Chaos that bring about evil. The interpretation according to which human behaviour is responsible for what happens is in fact a tool for expelling feelings of powerlessness. When evil has a meaning, one can try to discover this meaning and set out a course of action in response to the message it contains. Or one can conclude that the evil should be avoided or that divine assistance is needed to face it, which again are attitudes contrary to a feeling of being helplessly drowned in the evil. Trust in divine assistance means that one does not become paralysed in encounters with evil but 'receives' the strength and hope to overcome it. In this way, one comes to terms with evil on a certain level, which is obviously an advantage. One can fight feelings of despair and powerlessness which lead to passivity.

There are, however, also disadvantages to this world view. It may be dangerous to attribute too much to personal responsibility. If non-moral evil happens to a person then, according to this view, it is this person's own fault. This line of reasoning has no place for coincidence and, rigidly applied, it is merciless to victims of evil. Being ill, for instance, is one's own fault. This way of blaming the victim is to be rejected, as there are powers of Chaos and forms of evil we are powerless against and which may strike any of us by chance. Another disadvantage to this line of reasoning is that it may lead to scapegoating. If disasters happen and the people are convinced that this is caused by human behaviour, there is a risk of the powerless within the community — or outsiders — being blamed as the guilty ones.

The *Book of Job* can be considered as a work of protest against this line of thinking. Job, the main protagonist, falls ill and has an extended run of bad luck, but he has done nothing wrong. The cosmic opponent, the Enemy, is advanced as the one who strikes Job, just as in VC the Devil and demons cause illnesses and other kinds of evil. But where does this leave God? How can God permit this evil?

There are advantages to believing in a personal God. One cannot pray to Fate, for instance. Faced with meaningless evil one can seek comfort in God and ask for help. However, the encounter with natural disasters such as earthquakes and humanity's self-inflicted horrors such as genocide raises the question: where is God? The evils the 20th century has witnessed show the bankruptcy of interpretation systems applied on a large scale. There is no meaning in genocide and it does not really help to advance a supernatural being like the Devil as the guilty one. Perceiving order in the Chaos that is life on earth and attributing meaning to evil or suffering can only be done on a very small scale: one can only speak about one's own individual life. Individual authors have tried to describe how they see the relation between God and evil. Eí, for instance, refers to the tears of the powerless that go to God, who avenges all evil done to them. This is an expression of

hope for justice. In the Apc, God is said to dry the tears of the people when the end has come. This is an expression of hope for consolation. Eí also refers to God's mercy, and demands of the people that they be merciful. Perhaps God's mercy will only be brought about when people are merciful.

We must all encounter evil. We have to deal with evil because it is part of life. We need to interpret the things happening to us in order to come to terms with what life brings us. Life is Chaos, but we must try to detect order in it. With hope and a desire for what is good we must sail between Scylla and Charybdis. We should not be sucked down and swallowed by despair and feelings of powerlessness, nor should we attempt to fight what is beyond our power and thus shoulder excessive responsibility. The monsters are there — they are part of our existence. We must face them. We can only *try* to avoid them.

Appendix I: The date of *Epistil Ísu*

Epistil Ísu belongs to the Old Irish period, on linguistic grounds (O'Keeffe, 1905, p. 190). There are several internal and external clues which throw light upon the question of when the Sunday Letter was introduced into Ireland. First, there is the episode in EÍ itself, which refers to the transfer from Rome to Ireland. Second, several annalistic entries speak about documents resembling the Sunday Letter being brought to Ireland. Finally, the relationship with the affiliated text called *Cáin Domnaig* should be considered.

Conall mac Coelmaine is named in EÍ (§§20-2[670]): he went to Rome as a pilgrim, returning to Ireland with both the Sunday Law and Letter. The text does not say where he got the Law text, but the Letter he copied from the specimen that had fallen down on the altar of St Peter in Rome. Conall mac Coelmaine was abbot of the island Inis Coel (Inniskeel in Gweebarra Bay, County Donegal) at the end of the sixth century (O'Keeffe, 1905, p. 191[671]). However, this does not tell us the date when the Letter became known to the Irish because the impression is given that the Letter remained hidden for a period. This ended when Conall appeared in a vision/dream to the cleric, who received the command to spread the message of the Letter. There is no indication in EÍ about when this happened.

The annalistic entries do not refer to Conall as the one who brought the Letter (and the Law), but other clerics are mentioned. According to the *Annals of Ulster*, the following happened in 887:

"Eipistil do thiachtain lasin ailithir docum n-Erenn co Cain Domnaigh 7 co forcetlaibh maithibh ailibh" (Mac Airt, Mac Niocaill, 1983, p. 342).

"A letter, with the 'Law of Sunday' and other good instructions, came to Ireland with the Pilgrim" (*ibid.*, p. 343)

According to this entry in AU, Law and Letter arrive together in the second part of the 9th century. Strictly speaking it is not said that the epistle mentioned here is the same as the Sunday Letter, but this is not inconceivable.

Chronicum Scotorum, 'A Chronicle of the Irish' (CS; edition and

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[670] YBL also mentions him at the beginning of the text (see O'Keeffe, 1905, p. 192, §1, n. 1).
[671] See also O'Keeffe (1905, p. 212). A mistake about his death date has been made in the secondary literature. I hope to write about this in a future publication.

translation: Hennessy, 1866), gives more details. According to this text, the Letter seems to have been introduced into Ireland several times. The first time is in the early 9th century, in the year 811:

"Annus prodigiorum annso.
As inte tainig in Cele Dé
don fairgi anes cosaibh tirmaib
cen culud,
et do bertha stuagh sgribta
do nimh do triasa ndenad procect
do Gaoidelaibh,

et do bertea suas doridisi í
in tan toirged an procect;
et tigedh an Cheli Dé gach
laoi darsan fairrge fodes,
iar toirgsin an procecta"
(Hennessy, 1866, p. 126)

"This was a year of prodigies.
It was in it the Céle Dé came over
the sea from the south, dry footed,
without a boat;
and a written roll used to be given to
him from Heaven, out of which he
would give instruction to the
Gaeidhel,

and it used to be taken up again
when the instruction was delivered;
and the Céle Dé was wont to go each
day across the sea, southwards,
after imparting the instruction"
(*ibid.*, p. 127).

The *Céli Dé* (Culdees), or 'Servants of God', are a religious reform[672] movement (to which Oengus, the author of FO, also belonged). This new order of ascetics appeared in the later part of the 8th century (for more about this movement, see Hughes, 1966, pp. 173-84). These 'Servants of God' followed strict Sunday rules: one was not allowed to work on Sunday, nor even to gather or prepare food (*ibid.*, p. 178). It is remarkable, however, that the *Céle Dé*, who brings the heavenly roll, comes from abroad: across the sea and from the south. This entry does not say that the Servant of God teaches the people about Sunday; the content of the written roll is not referred to. It is, however, not improbable that this concerns the Sunday Letter: the roll comes from Heaven and is brought in a miraculous way to Ireland. The phrase 'dry footed' also occurs in EÍ: one of the Sunday miracles is that the children of Israel went through the Red Sea with dry feet (see O'Keeffe, 1905, pp. 198-9). According to the entry in CS, the heavenly roll does not stay in Ireland but returns to Heaven whenever it has been used for instruction. In the 887 entry, the same event referred to by AU is also described by CS:

"Int ailithir gus in duilleg
do radadh do nimh
do tiachtain do cum Eirinn co Cain
Domnaigh ocus forcetlaib maitibh"
(Hennessy, 1866, p. 170)

"The Pilgrim, with the leaf
which was given from Heaven,
came to Erinn, with the Cain
Domnaigh, and good precepts"
(*ibid.*, p. 171).

There are some differences from AU: in CS the document is not said to be a letter, but a leaf. Moreover, CS names Heaven as the place of origin.

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[672] It concerned a moral, not a constitutional reform (Hughes, 1966, p. 182).

This makes it all the more probable that these entries are referring to the Sunday Letter. The pilgrim is said to depart from Ireland in 898. CS mentions, furthermore, a date in the 10th century — 946 — when a document falls from Heaven and another cleric (again a *Céle Dé*) comes to Ireland to instruct the inhabitants:

"Annus mirabilium,   "A year of prodigies,
id est attarla an duillenn do   *i.e.* in which the Leaf came from
nimh et attudchaidh an Cele Dé   Heaven, and the Cele-Dé was wont
don fairrge andes   to come across the sea, from the
                                       south,

do procept do Gaoidelaibh"   to instruct the Gaeidhel"
(Hennessy, 1866, pp. 206, 208)   (*ibid.*, pp. 207, 209).

Here, CS does not connect the heavenly document and the religious man explicitly. There are thus three years mentioned in CS in which a heavenly document is introduced in Ireland: 811, 887 and 946. In one case the Law of Sunday is mentioned as well. The people who introduce these miraculous texts are a pilgrim and a *Céle Dé*; on one occasion the document falls straight from Heaven.

The *Annals of the Four Masters* describe the same event as CS for the year 806 (*recte* 811):

"Is in mbliadhainsi táinic an Cele   "In this year the Ceile-Dei came over
Dé don fhairrcce a ndes   the sea, [from the south[673]]
cosaibh tiormaibh cen ethar idir,   with dry feet, without a vessel;
7 do berthea sduagh scriobhtha   and a written roll was given
do nimh dhó trias a ndénadh   him from heaven, out of which he
proicept do Ghaoidhelaibh,   preached to the Irish,
7 do beirthí suas dorídhisi í   and it was carried up again
an tan taipccedh an procepht.   when the sermon was finished.
No teighedh an mac eccailsi   This ecclesiastic used to go
cech laoi dars an fhairrge fodhes   every day southwards across the sea,
iar ttairccsin an phroicepta"   after finishing his preaching"
(O'Donovan, 1856, pp. 416, 418)   (*ibid.*, pp. 417, 419).

Another entry mentions a pilgrim, who is named. This religious messenger comes to Ireland in 884:

"Ananloen an tailithir cos in epistil "Ananloen, the pilgrim, came to
do radadh do nimh i nIerusalem   Ireland with the epistle which had
co Cain Domhnaigh 7 foircetlaibh   been given from heaven at Jerusalem,
maithe do thiachtain a nErinn"   with the Cain-Domhnaigh and good
                                       instructions"

(O'Donovan, 1856, p. 536)   (*ibid.*, p. 537).

[673] This 'from the south' is absent in O'Donovan's translation.

John O'Donovan (*ibid*, p. 536) says in a footnote that AFM 884 corresponds with AU 887. To this could be added CS 887. Combining the details from AU, CS and AFM one could conclude that in 887 a pilgrim called Ananloen brought a Sunday Letter and a Sunday Law to Ireland. This Sunday Letter is, however, not the same as *Epistil Ísu*: EÍ or its Latin source fell to earth in Rome; this Letter fell to earth in Jerusalem. Whether the Law of Sunday mentioned here is the same as CD or as the law part of EÍ or another version can no longer be established. AFM seems to give a date for the departure of the pilgrim Ananloen as well: it says that the pilgrim leaves Ireland in 893 (O'Donovan, 1856, pp. 550-1[674]). The date 893 should be 898, according to Seán Mac Airt (1988, p. 137, footnote).

An entry in the *Annals of Inisfallen* (AI; edition and translation: Mac Airt, 1988) refers to the arrival of 'Anealoen the pilgrim' in Ireland in 887, but instead of bringing a heavenly document he is said to have abolished the custom of wearing the hair long. The entry adds that tonsures were accepted (Mac Airt, 1988, p. 137). AI characterises 947 as a year of miracles, among which the following:

"Duilend do nim	"A leaf [descended] from heaven
for altoir nImblecha Ibair (...)"	upon the altar of Imlech Ibuir (...)"
(Mac Airt, 1988, p. 152)	(*ibid.*, p. 153).

Unfortunately, once again nothing is said about the contents of the document. If this refers to an Irish version of the Sunday Letter then these *Annals* give a contextualisation of the tradition: no reference is made to the Letter being imported either by a pilgrim or a *Céle Dé*, but it descends directly from Heaven upon an Irish altar[675].

The *Annals* give thus several dates in which heavenly documents are introduced in Ireland, of which the earliest date is 811, given by CS and AFM. The 9th century is the date which most scholars ascribe to EÍ. This is done by Ludwig Christian Stern (1897, p. 495), who gives no reasons. The early 9th century is the date Priebsch (1906-7, pp. 148-52) assigns to the text. This is the time of Pehtred (about 830), to whom Priebsch attributes the Old English Sunday sermon B that is closely connected with EÍ. Pehtred may have communicated with the author of EÍ. Another connection between Pehtred, the Old English sermons and Ireland is the mention of the Irish Niall mac Ialláin or Gialláin. The letter of Ecgred refers to this man, calling him a deacon who was raised from the

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[674] O'Donovan writes in a footnote (1856, p. 551) that the pilgrim Ananloen is said to have come from Jerusalem. The text, however, only ascribes Jerusalem as place of origin to the Letter from Heaven.

[675] AI names 1040 as the date on which the Law of Sunday is ordained: stealing, fighting, carrying loads and fetching cattle within doors are forbidden on Sunday (Mac Airt, 1988, pp. 204-5).

dead[676]. This Niall is also mentioned in the Old English sermons A and B and in the Irish *Annals*[677]. Priebsch (1906-7, p. 151) furthermore refers to Meyer, who dates the language of EÍ to the 9th century. Finally, he points to EÍ itself: §32 says that fleeing before 'pagans' — whom Priebsch interprets as the Vikings — is allowed on Sunday. Kenney (1929/79, pp. 476-7) argues for the early 9th century as the date of the Letter's arrival in Ireland. He supposes that the Letter came from the Frankish dominions. He bases this opinion upon both the tradition about Aldebert and his Letter and the interdiction of Charlemagne, both dating from the 8th century. He moreover refers to the entry 811 in CS and emphasises the fact that a *Céle Dé* is mentioned here, commenting: "the development of a stricter Sabbatarianism appears to coincide with the institution of the *Céli Dé*" (*ibid.*, p. 477). Robert McNally (1973, p. 177) follows Kenney and dates the text "about 830 or somewhat earlier" (*ibid.*, p. 176). The date 830 seems to be borrowed from Priebsch, but McNally gives no reasons nor does he mention his source. Vendryes (1926, p. 450) points, like Priebsch, to the references to "*genti*", whom he also interprets as Vikings, and which he sees as evidence for the 9th century as a date. He adds that there might be an instance of a late term in EÍ, namely *benn-chopur* (EÍ §20), if this means 'round-tower[678]'. He seems to withdraw from this line of reasoning when he remarks in the next sentence that this may be a later addition.

The relationship between CD and EÍ is the last question to be discussed here. Vernam Hull (1966, p. 156) sees two references in CD which may offer some clues about its date. First, CD §3 refers to the *Law of Patrick*. CD should thus be later than the time when this text was institutionalised which, according to AU, was in 736 (*recte*: 737). Second, CD §11 mentions as a punishment for the violation of Sunday:

"Is ed do-beir cenéla echtranna co claidbib díglae dia mbrith hi fognam i tíre geinte" (Hull, 1966, p. 170)	"This it is that brings foreign races with avenging swords to bear them in bondage into pagan lands" (*ibid.*, p. 171).

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[676] According to Hom. B, Niall "was allowed to return to life in order to testify to the genuineness of the letter written by the Lord in the seventh heaven in letters of gold (...)" (Whitelock, 1982, p. 52). Whitelock (*ibid.*) points out that this is the explicit connection between the mention of Niall's resurrection and the Sunday Letter which remains implicit in the letter of Ecgred.

[677] Priebsch (1906-7, p. 149) only refers to AU, but many other *Annals* (see Whitelock, 1982, p. 49, n. 20) give his date of death as well (ranging from 855 to 860).

[678] O'Keeffe translates this as 'tower'. Gearóid Mac Eoin pointed out another translation to me: it might signify the top of the roof where the gable and the roof come together. Mac Eoin referred to a text about the consecration of a church from LB (edition and translation: Stokes, 1901b). The extant text is dated to the 11th century (*ibid.*, p. 363; the references to *bennchopur* are to be found on pp. 380-1; Stokes translates 'pinnacles').

Hull points out that in the Irish *Annals* the word *geinti* usually signifies the Norsemen. The first arrival of the Vikings is given in the AU entry for AD 794 (*recte* 795). This would argue for a date of CD of not before the end of the 8th century. Hull finally refers to the 886 (*recte* 887) entry in AU about the pilgrim who brought CD and an epistle to Ireland. This last reference would argue for the transitional period between Old and Middle Irish, but Hull assigns the language of CD to the first half of the 8th century.

Hull (*ibid.*, p. 157) therefore tries to reconcile the linguistic evidence with the external evidence, because the text may have been composed 150 years earlier than one would assume on basis of the AU entry. He points out that in 737 the *Law of Patrick* might have become operative for Ireland as a whole, while in some parts of the country it was already used before that date. The reference to 'pagans' could be of a biblical or homiletic nature. "At all events the word *geinti* is often used in Early Irish in the general sense of 'pagans' or 'heathens' who are not necessarily Norsemen" (*ibid.*, p. 157). Finally, he suggests that the entry in AU might refer to a later revised version. Hull adduces the story about Conall mac Coelmaine, who brought the Sunday Letter to Ireland in the 6th century. He adds that Conall may also have brought a version of the Law of Sunday (as pointed out above this is exactly what EÍ says in §20, but Hull overlooks this). In short, Hull assigns CD to the first half of the 8th century on the basis of linguistic evidence (*ibid.*, p. 158). According to him, the Law text depends on the Letter; the scribes of CD introduced material from EÍ in their text (Hull, 1966, pp. 152-3). This would mean that EÍ is to be dated to the first half of the 8th century or earlier[679].

I would like to comment briefly upon Hull's line of reasoning. I do not see why the reference to the *Law of Patrick* would pose a problem for his argumentation as the AU entry on this law is still early, *i.e.* the first part of the 8th century. It is interesting to note that the part of CD which refers to non-Christian enemies — the end of CD: §§9-11 — seems to depend upon a Sunday Letter. In §9 the blessing for the obedient is announced and the Letter fallen from Heaven onto the altar in Rome is referred to. The end of CD threatens with divine punishments instead of the prescription of fines: death for the soul, plague on people and fields (§10), famine, unseasonable weather, the above-mentioned foreign enemies, battle, war and all kinds of bad emotion (§11). Therefore, the reference to the foreign enemies should be traced to a Sunday Letter like EÍ or a Latin one, which motif indeed originates from the Bible.

However, the reference to enemies in EÍ which Priebsch mentions needs more attention. CD lists actions that are allowed on Sunday, among them: "*robud ria náimtib*" (Hull, 1966, p. 160), 'to give warning before enemies' (*ibid.*, p. 161). All the manuscripts of CD give the neutral term

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[679] Following Hull, McNamara (1975, pp. 62-3) writes that the Latin Letter could have been brought to Ireland in the 7th or even the 6th century. The Irish translation might date from the early 8th century, just like CD.

náma(e), 'an enemy, a foe'. However, EÍ, where this exemption also
occurs, does not use such a neutral term: "*teched ria n-genntib nó robudh
ria creich nó slúagh*" (O'Keeffe, 1905, p. 208), 'fleeing before pagans;
warning before a raiding party or an army' (*ibid.*, p. 209). Only one
manuscript (LB) used by O'Keeffe reads "*naimtiu*" (enemies) as the kind
of people one may flee from on Sunday, and it omits the phrase about the
warning. This reference to non-Christians in the part of EÍ that deals with
the Irish historical context suggests that the Vikings had come by the time
this text was written. Or else it would refer to non-Christian population
groups in Ireland in the 9th century. It is more likely that the Viking
invasions are meant by the non-Christian enemies.

To conclude this appendix, if the episode in EÍ about the transfer to Ireland
is based on historical fact, the earliest time a Sunday Letter would have
arrived in Ireland would be the end of the 6th century. Whether this was a
Latin or an Irish text is not clear, but if we take certain details in EÍ at
face value there is reason to suppose that this version was written in Latin.
Conall copied (literally: wrote) the Letter in Rome from the Letter that had
descended from Heaven; the text does not say that he translated it. How-
ever, this text disappears for a while, and this might be a reflection of
what may have happened to other versions as well. The different entries in
the *Annals* would appear to indicate that several versions of the Sunday
Letter arrived in Ireland. In particular, the reference to Jerusalem as the
address of the Letter shows that other versions were known there too.
These may have been in either Irish or Latin. EÍ is the only extant Irish
version of the Sunday Letter, but this does not mean that it is also the
earliest Irish version: the mention of the Sunday Letter in CD might also
refer to an Irish version of the Letter that is now lost. It is beyond my
competence to assign a date to EÍ based on linguistic evidence, but the
other cumulative evidence seems to argue for the early 9th century.

Appendix II: Provisional list of early Irish texts about encounters with monsters

This list gives the relevant texts on encounters with monsters that conform with the criteria formulated in the Introduction to this study. The list is not exhaustive but based on my readings so far.

1. Monsters in heroic texts

1.1 *Aided Cheltchair maic Uthechair*, 'The Death of Celtchar mac Uthechar'
1.2 *Cath Maige Muccraime*, 'The Battle of Mag Mucrama'
1.3 *Compert Conculainn*, 'The Conception of Cú Chulainn'
1.4 *De chophur in dá muccida*, 'The Begetting of the Two Swineherds'
1.5 *Duanaire Finn*, 'The Poem Book of Finn'
1.6 *Echtra Fergusa maic Leiti*, 'The Adventure of Fergus mac Leite'
1.7 *Fled Bricrend*, 'The Feast of Bricriu'
1.8 *Immram Brain*, 'The Voyage of Bran'
1.9 *Immram curaig Maíle Dúin*, 'The voyage of Máel Dúin's boat'
1.10 *Immram curaig Ua Corra*, 'The Voyage of the Uí Chorra's boat'
1.11 *Macgnímartha Finn*, 'The Boyhood Deeds of Finn'
1.12 *Scéla Muicce Meic Dathó*, 'The Tale of Mac Dathó's Pig'
1.13 *Táin bó Cúailnge*, 'The Cattle-Raid of Cúailnge'
1.14 *Táin bó Froích*, 'The Cattle Raid of Froech'
1.15 *Tochmarc Emire*, 'The Wooing of Emer'
1.16 *Togail Bruidne Da Derga*, 'The Destruction of Da Derga's Hall'

2. Monsters in hagiographical texts

2.1 *Amra Senáin*, 'The Eulogy of Senán' (Preface)
2.2 *Betha Coluimb Chille*, 'The Life of Colum Cille'
2.3 *Bethu Brigte*, 'The Life of Brigit: *Slicht sain in so budesta*' (Appendix)
2.4 *Félire Óengusso Céli Dé*, 'The Calender of Oengus Céle Dé' (Glosses)
2.5 *Navigatio Sancti Brendani abbatis*, 'The Voyage of Saint Brendan the abbot'
2.6 *Vita Sancti Columbae*, 'The Life of Saint Columba'
2.7 *Vita Tripartita*, 'The tripartite Life (of Patrick)'

3. Monsters in cosmological and eschatological texts

3.1 *Acallam na Senórach*, 'The Colloquy of the Ancients'
3.2 *Ad-fét Augustín*, 'Augustine relates'
3.3 *Altus prosator*, 'The High Creator'
3.4 *Atluchammar buidi do Día uilechumachtach*, 'We give thanks to Almighty God'
3.5 *Bráth, ní ba beg a brisim*, 'Doom! Not slight will be its uproar'
3.6 *Cétnad n-áisse*, 'Prophylactic Song of Age (or: of Long Life)'

3.7 *Colum cáid cumachtach*, 'Columba pious mighty'
3.8 *Dindšenchas* (Etymological traditions on place names)
3.9 *Epistil Ísu*, 'The Letter of Jesus'
3.10 *Fís Adamnáin*, 'Adomnán's Vision'
3.11 *Foscél ar Brennain*, 'A Minor Tale about Brendan'
3.12 *Hisperica Famina*, 'Western Sayings'
3.13 *Lamentatio S. Ambrosii*, 'The Lamentation of Saint Ambrose'
3.14 *Saltair na Rann*, 'Psalter of the Staves, or Quatrains'
3.15 *Scéla lái brátha*, 'The Tidings of Doomsday'
3.16 *Siaburcharpat Con Culaind*, 'Cú Chulainn's Phantom Chariot'
3.15 *An Tenga Bithnúa*, 'The Evernew Tongue'

4. Monsters in miscellaneous texts

4.1 *Aislinge meic Conglinne*, 'The Vision of Mac Conglinne'

Indices

Titles of (collections of) texts

Names of monsters

Names of (groups of) persons

Names of places

Authors of sources

Authors of secondary literature, editions and translations

Glossary
(spelling and translations taken from DIL)

á	(...) height, a height
ab	river
abacc	dwarf
adaltras	adultery, fornication
adbal/adbol/adbul	great, mighty, vast
adúathmar	very awful, terrible
áer	cutting, incising; act of satirising, lampooning, defaming; satire, lampoon
áes	(...) people, folk, those who etc.
áes síde	supernatural beings, fairies
aided	violent death; (...) (unpleasant) fate, plight
ailithir	stranger, pilgrim (...)
ainim(m)/anaim(m)	soul; life
airchót	act of harming, injuring, harm, injury, damage
airde	sign, token; characteristic, quality
airdrech/airdrach	sprite, phantom
aislinge	vision, dream
amrae	(...) a wonderful thing, wonder, marvel; miracle; vision; eulogy
anacul	act of protecting, shielding; protection; act of sparing, giving quarter; quarter
anfud	tempest, storm; turbulence, fury, rage
angbaid	wicked; fierce, ruthless; valiant, brave (?)
anmain i n-anmain	a life for a life
anmann	animal
antach	lazy, quiet
ard	(...) high place, height (...)
arracht	idol, idolatrous image; apparition, spectre, monster
athgabáil	in legal sense of the process of recovery of debts, etc, by distraint (...)
athláech	ex-layman, one who has become a cleric (presumably at a later age than the normal)
basach	having hoofs or claws
bath/baath/báth	death; sea
bedg	start, spring, leap, bound; rush, rapid dash; attack
ben (pl. *mná*)	woman (...); wife
benaid	beats, strikes; hews, cuts down, off; slays; wounds (...)
berach/birach	pointed, sharp; having pointed ears, horned
bethu	life, existence; lifetime, (written) life; food, nourishment (...); property, estate
bíast	(wild) beast, monster
bíasta mara	sea beasts, sea monsters
bled	whale, sea monster

bledmíl	sea monster, some kind of reptile; whale
bolg	bag (...); belly, stomach; (smith's) bellows; bubble; blister; berry; bud; boss, ball (...)
bolg ngobann	smith's bellows
brat/bratt	cloak, mantle
bratán	fish
bró	quern: millstone, grindstone; act of grinding (?) (...)
brú (brá)	eyebrow; brow
bruth	(...) (glowing) mass, lump; charge of metal; a boiling, brewing
cáin	law, regulation, rule; fine, tax, tribute (...)
cásc	Pasch, Easter, paschal feast
cath	battle, fight; troop, battalion
céile	servant, bondsman, vassal, subject (...)
cell	church; monastic settlement or foundation; collection of ecclesiastical buildings (...)
cíccarach	ravenous
cinnemain	fate, destiny, chance, misfortune
cinnid	defines, fixes, settles; completes, finishes; decides (on a course of action), makes a decision
cinniud	(...) certainty, limit, definition; decision, decree; agreement; destiny, fate
císach	receiving or exacting tribute
colum(b)	dove
compert	judgment, decision; conception, act of begetting, procreation; offspring, produce; child(ren); sperm
corrbolg	crane-bag
crích	boundary, limit, (...); confines, territory, district, land
crimthan(n)	fox
croderg/cróderg	blood-red
cú	dog, hound; wolf (...)
cú glas	grey wolf: of person without legal status except through his wife, hence one whose children become in effect members of their mother's *fine*, their father as an outsider having no *fine*; stranger, castaway (?)
cullach	boar; stallion
cumal	female slave, bondwoman (...); a variable unit of value; generally fixed at three milch cows; fine, mulct, compensation
delb	form, figure, appearance, shape; likeness, image, statue (...)
delg	thorn; pin, brooch; peg, spike, nail, pointed implement
deól	the act of sucking
deorad	stranger, outlander; foreign settler; outlaw, exile, wanderer
derg	red, ruddy; red with blood; bloody, sanguinary; red-hot, incandescent; full-blooded, flushed with pride (...)
dergscé	red hawthorn
día	God; god, goddess, supernatural being, object of worship (...)
díabul	the Devil, Lucifer, Satan; devil, demon

díguin	violation of a man's protection through the wounding and slaying of another
dílaid	satisfies, appeases, (…), expiates, atones for (…)
dímór	vast, huge, great
dindšenchas	history of notable places (lit. hill-lore), topography, legendary lore
dinid	sucks
do-bádi	drowns, extinguishes; quenches, destroys, exterminates (…)
doéscar-slúag	the common herd, rabble
domnach	Sunday, the Lord's day; church (…)
draconda	dragon-like; pertaining to or resembling the dragon-stone
drauc	dragon
drinnrosc	wish, request, boon demanded
dris	bramble, briar, thorn-bush
druí	druid; magician, wizard or diviner (in general, often used of equivalent of the druid in non-Celtic peoples. In religious literature *druí* corresponds to Latin *magus*)
drúth	professional jester or buffoon (…); imbecile, person not responsible for his actions
dún	fort
ech	horse
ech usci	water horse
echlasc	horse-switch
echtra(e)	expedition, journey, voyage; an adventurous journey, an expedition in quest of adventure
én	bird
enech/ainech	face, front; honour, repute; dignity, status
énflaith	bird-reign, bird-rule
epistil	an epistle, letter
etsad/estad/autsad/itsad	treasury, storehouse; abode, dwelling-place, residence; retreat
etsad-bolg	treasure bag
fairrge/fairge	extent, expanse (?); the open sea, ocean
fál	fence, hedge, enclosure; a king (?); abundance (?); science, learning (?); name of the stone at Temair (Tara) said to have been brought to Ireland by the Tuatha Dé Danann, and generally known as the Lia Fáil; a name of Ireland
fátal	fate, lot (?)
fer (pl.: *fir*)	a man; a husband; (…)
fertas	a pole or stake: a shaft attached to a chariot (…); a stick used for winding or spinning a yarn; a raised bank or ridge of earth or sand (gen. of a bar or shallow near the sea-shore or a ford in a river; common in place names)
fíaduball	a wild apple, a crab-apple
fían	a band of roving men whose principal occupations were hunting and war, also a troop of professional fighting-men under a leader; a company, number of persons
filid (sg.: *fili*)	seers, diviners (originally); poets (historians, panegyrists, satirists), learned people

fine   a group of persons of the same family or kindred;
                                progeny, descendants, a clan, tribe, race

finechas   the land and possessions held by a *fine*; hereditary terri-
                                tory; kindred, descendants

finnae   a hair

fír   (...) what is true; truth, right; a pledge, guarantee; an
                                attestation: a proof, test, ordeal; right, due

fír fer   fair play (in combat)

fír flatha   the word of a prince; justice of a ruler

fír nDé   the judgment of God, the truth/justice of God

fír ngascid   fair fighting

fírinne   justice, righteousness; truth

fís   a vision

flaith   lordship, sovereignty, rule; a ruler, prince; liquor

flaithem   a ruler, prince (...)

fled   feast, banquet, carousal; a beverage

folt   the hair of the head (coll.); foliage

forderg   red on surface; very red (esp. of colour of blood); blood-
                                stained, wounded; bloody, sanguinary

fúath   (...) a hideous or supernatural form, a spectre, appar-
                                ition, monster

gáes   sagacity, intelligence, acuteness

gáeth (pl.: *gáith*)   wise, intelligent, shrewd; skilful (?) (...)

gaisced   weapons, arms (coll.), armour; valour, prowess, feats of
                                arms, skill at arms

garb   rough, rugged, coarse (...)

geis (pl.: *gessi*)   a tabu, a prohibition; a positive injunction or demand;
                                something unlawful or forbidden; a wrong; a spell, an
                                incantation

genti   Gentiles; 'heathens', 'pagans'; the 'heathen' Norsemen

gentliucht   'gentilism', 'heathenism'; 'heathen' lore, wizardry,
                                'heathen' spells

gér   sharp, keen

gobae   a smith

gort/gart   a field (of arable or pasture land); a field of battle; land,
                                territory; a corn-crop, standing corn (...)

gránda   horrible, terrible, ugly, repulsive, hateful

gríb   a gerfalcon; a griffin; a claw, a talon (?); a fierce war-
                                rior, a hero, a chieftain

gríbda   griffin-like, fierce, valorous

íasc   fish

imbas/imbus   great knowledge; poetic talent, inspiration; fore-knowl-
                                edge; magic lore; referring especially to knowledge or
                                fore-knowledge obtained by magic or occult means

imbas forosna(i)   knowledge which illuminates (a special gift of clairvoy-
                                ance or prophetic knowledge supposed to be possessed by
                                poets in ancient Ireland) (...)

immalle   jointly, together; at the same time

immram   rowing around, sea voyage

imthecht   the act of going about, journeying, proceeding, going;
                                (...) a wandering, a course, journey, departure; (...)

	(esp. in pl.) adventures, exploits, doings, experience; news, tidings (...)
inis	an island
Ís(s)u/Ísa	Jesus
láech	a layman; a warrior
láth/láith	warrior; heat, rutting
lebedán/libedán	Leviathan
léo	lion
letraid	cuts (off), severs, fells (...); wounds, lacerates (...); strikes, smites (...) (?)
lia	stone
linn	pool, lake; sea, ocean
loch	lake; inlet of the sea; pool; black, dark (...)
locuiste/locusta	locust(s)
lommrad	the act of stripping, making bare; act of shearing (sheep); fleece; act of plundering, despoiling; act of stripping of wealth, levying a fine, or payment; excerpt, literary extract
lommthrú	doomed
lorg	(...) staff, stick; rod or wand of office; club, cudgel; handle or shaft; penis
loscann	toad, frog (...)
lúamnach/lúaimnech	volatile, flying, fluttering, moving, active; restless, wavering, inconstant
lúan	moon; Monday; radiance, light
lúchorpán	dwarf
mac(c)	a son; a boy, a young person (...)
mac(c) tíre	'son of (the) country', wolf
mael	cropheaded, shorn; (...) a cropped head, close-cut hair (...)
maith	good (...); that which is good (...)
michoirthe	a misbirth, a monster
míl	an animal; a louse; a hare (...)
mór/már	great (...)
muc(c)	a pig, sow (...)
muir	sea
múir?/múr	a mouse
muirbolc	'a sea bag', inlet of the sea
muiriasc	sea fish
murbach/muirbech	a breakwater; a level strip of land along the sea coast
náit	a leech (worm)
náma(e)	an enemy, foe
nath(a)ir	serpent, snake
neimnech	poisonous, venomous; envenomed, deadly, dangerous, keen, intense (...)
noídiu	an infant, a young child
óinmit	a fool
olc	evil, bad, wrong; a bad man, an evil doer; an evil, misfortune
omthand	a thistle
omun/ómun	fear, the state of being afraid; afraid, apprehensive;

	fearful, terrible
píast	beast, monster
píast uiscide	water beast, water monster
plág	plague, pestilence; a scourge (?)
rána?/(ráin?)	a toad or frog
remscél	a foretale, introductory tale
rí	a king
ríastartha(e)	distorted, contorted
ríastrad	the act of contorting; a distortion
rogu	the act of choosing; a choice, selection (...)
rosc	(...) a short poem, ode or chant; a legal maxim or award
rúad	red; strong, mighty, formidable
rúamar	the act (occupation) of digging
ruise/ruisse/russe	red
ruisid	reddens, stains red?
rún	something hidden or occult, a mystery; a secret; (...)
sabbait	the Sabbath
scáth	shadow, shade; reflexion, image; phantom, spectre; mirror (...)
scáthderc	mirror, looking-glass
scé	a thorn bush, whitethorn
sceïd	vomits, spews, ejects (...)
scoirp	scorpion; the constellation Scorpio
seilche	a shell-bearing animal or insect: a turtle or tortoise; a snail
sen	old, ancient, long-standing (...)
senchas	old tales, ancient history, tradition; genealogy; traditional law
síabraid	arouses to fury, distorts, transforms; enchants, bewitches; one who is aroused to martial fury (?)
síd/síth	a fairy hill or mound (in plural: *áes síde*, see above); peace (...)
sinech	(...); having (large) teats or paps
sinnach	a fox
smér	(black-)berry (...)
smir	marrow
súgmaire	one who sucks (...)
súigid	sucks, draws in, absorbs, attracts
súigthech	sucking, drawing, pulling
taidbred	showing, demonstrating, manifesting; looking at, gazing at, surveying, inspecting
táin	driving out, off; cattle raid, plundering expedition; driven cattle, herd, flock; plunder, booty, spoil
tálcend	adze-head: a nickname of St Patrick; a cleric, priest
teime	darkness; death
teine	fire; a fireplace, hearth; lightning; pertaining to fire, fiery, blazing
teinnid/tennaid	cuts, cracks, breaks (...)
tein(n)tide	fiery
tendaid	presses, strains (...)
tocaid	destines

toceth	fortune, chance; good fortune, prosperity, wealth
tochmarc	act of wooing; courting
togail	act of attacking, besieging, sacking, destroying
toicthiu	fortune, chance; good fortune, prosperity, wealth
tonn	wave; outpouring; sea; abundance; bog, swamp (...)
torc	boar; chieftain, hero; heart; collar, torque
torcrad	boars (coll.); host of chieftains
toreth	produce, increase; result, profit; fruit
tośúgad	act of imbibing
trácht	strand, shore; (...)
tráigid	ebbs, recedes; causes to ebb; retreats, diminishes; exhausts
trí	three
trócaire	mercy; leniency, equity
trú	a doomed person, one who is fey; wretch, miserable person; villain, blackguard
tul	protuberance, projecting part, swelling (...)
tul (étain)	forehead
tul tuinne	crest of a wave
úath	fear, horror, terror; a horrible or terrible thing (...)
úathmar	dreadful; terrifying; terrible, horrible, awful, direful
ubull	the fruit of the apple tree; an apple; the fruit of of other trees, viz. fig and palm trees; the fruit of the forbidden tree; apple of discord; the apple of the eye; the apple of the throat, Adam's apple; any globular object, a ball (...)

Abbreviations

Titles of texts:

AA	*Ad-fét Augustín*
ACC	*Amra Choluim(b) Chille*
Act	*Actus apostolorum*
AFM	*Annala rioghachta Eireann* (by the Four Masters)
AI	*Annals of Inisfallen*
Am	*Amos*
AnS	*Acallam na Senórach*
AP	*Altus prosator*
ApBB	*Appendix to Bethu Brigte*
Apc	*Apocalypse of John*
ApcAb	*Apocalypse of Abraham*
ApcEl	*Apocalypse of Elijah*
ApcPa	*Apocalypse of Paul*
ApcPe	*Apocalypse of Peter*
ApcVirg	*Apocalypse of the Virgin*
APl	*Acta Pauli*
AS	*Amra Senáin*
Asen	*Joseph and Aseneth*
AT	*Annals of Tigernach*
ATh	*Acta Sancti Thomae Apostoli*
AU	*Annals of Ulster*
Bar	*Baruch*
II Bar	*II Baruch*
III Bar	*III Baruch*
BB	*Bechbretha*
BCC	*Betha Coluim(b) Chille*
BDC	*Bruiden Da Chocae*
BMMM	*Brislech mór Maige Muirtheimne*
CD	*Cáin Domnaig*
CIH	*Corpus Iuris Hibernici*
CMM	*Cath Maige Mucrama*
CMR	*Cath Maighe Rath*
I Cor	*Epistula ad Corinthios I*
CRM	*Collectanea rerum memorabilum*
CS	*Chronicum Scotorum*
DF	*Duanaire Finn*
Dn	*Danihel (Daniel)*
Dt	*Deuteronomium*
EFmL	*Echtra Fergusa maic Leiti*
EÍ	*Epistil Ísu*
I En	*I Enoch*
II En	*II Enoch*

Eph	*Epistula ad Ephesios*
Est	*Hester (Esther)*
Ex	*Exodus*
Ez	*Hiezechiel (Ezekiel)*
FA	*Fís Adamnáin*
FB	*Fled Bricrend*
FO	*Félire Óengusso Céli Dé*
Gn	*Genesis*
GrApcEz	*Greek Apocalypse of Ezra*
GSLL	*Gnímradha in seseadh lai láin*
HE	*Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*
HF	*Hisperica Famina*
Iac	*Epistula Iacobi*
ICMD	*Immram curaig Maíle Dúin*
ICUC	*Immram curaig Ua Corra*
Idc	*Liber Iudicum (Judges)*
Idt	*Liber Iudith*
Ier	*Hieremias (Jeremiah)*
Io	*Evangelium secundum Iohannem*
Ioel	*Iohel (Joel)*
Ion	*Iona (Jonah)*
Ios	*Iosue (Joshua)*
Is	*Isaias (Isaiah)*
Jub	*Jubilees*
LadJac	*Ladder of Jacob*
Lam	*Lamentationes*
Lc	*Evangelium secundum Lucam*
LGE	*Lebor Gabála Érenn*
LivPro	*Lives of the Prophets*
Lv	*Leviticus*
LXX	*Septuagint*
Mal	*Malachi*
Mc	*Evangelium secundum Marcum*
I Mcc	*Liber I Macchabeorum*
II Mcc	*Liber II Macchabeorum*
MF	*Macgnímartha Finn*
Mi	*Micha*
Mt	*Evangelium secundum Mattheum*
Na	*Naum*
NBA	*Navigatio Sancti Brendani abbatis*
NH	*Naturalis Historia*
Nm	*Numeri*
NT	*New Testament*
Os	*Osee (Hosea)*
OT	*Old Testament*
I Par	*I Paralipomenon (I Chronicles)*
II Par	*II Paralipomenon (II Chronicles)*
pAS	*preface to Amra Senáin*
PB	*Passio Sancti Bartholomaei apostoli*
PP	*Pais Partholoin*
Prv	*Liber Proverbiorum Salomonis*

PS	*Pistis Sophia*
PsG	*Psalmi iuxta Septuaginta emendatus*
PsH	*Psalmi iuxta Hebraicum translatus*
III Rg	*Liber Malachim (I Kings)*
IV Rg	*Liber Malachim (II Kings)*
Rm	*Epistula ad Romanos*
Sap	*Liber Sapientiae (the Book of Wisdom)*
SC	*Sanas Chormaic*
ScCC	*Siaburcharpat Con Culaind*
SibOr	*Sibylline Oracles*
Sir	*Liber Iesu filii Sirach* or *Ecclesiasticus*
SLB	*Scéla lái brátha*
I Sm	*Liber Samuhelis (I Samuel)*
SnR	*Saltair na Rann*
So	*Sofonias (Zephaniah)*
TB	*An Tenga Bithnúa*
TBC	*Táin Bó Cúailnge*
TBDD	*Togail Bruidne Da Derga*
TBF	*Táin Bó Froích*
TE	*Tochmarc Emire*
TJud	*Testament of Judah*
TM	*Timna Muire*
TTA	*Tiagait trí haibne inár dtír*
VC	*Vita Sancti Columbae*
VG	*Vita prima Sanctae Geretrudis*
VisEz	*Vision of the Blessed Ezra*
VT	*Vita Tripartita*
Za	*Zaccharias (Zechariah)*

Latin Sunday Letters:

Ta	Cathedral Library, Tarragona (Baluze, 1677, col. 1396-9; Priebsch, 1936, pp. 35-7)
L1	Add 30853, BL (Delehaye, 1928, pp. 168-9)
M1	Clm 9550, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek München (Delehaye, 1899, pp. 179-81)
P	Lat 12270, BNP (Delehaye, 1899, pp. 181-4)
To	Todi (Migne, 1858, col. 367-9)
M2	21518, München (Priebsch, 1895, pp. 41-70)
Tou	208 (III, 135), Bibliothèque publique de Toulouse (Rivière, 1906, pp. 602-5)
V	Lat 1355, Imperial Library Vienna (Priebsch, 1899, pp. 130-4)
H	S. Petrikirche 30b, Bibliothek der Hansestadt Hamburg (Röhricht, 1890, pp. 440-2)
L2	Royal 8 F.vi, BL (Priebsch, 1901, pp. 400-6)

Old English 'Sunday' sermons

Hom. A	no. XLIII in Napier (1883, pp. 205-15)
Hom. B	no. XLIV (*ibid.*, pp. 215-26)
Hom. C	no. LVII (*ibid.*, pp. 291-9)
Hom. D	in Napier (1901, pp. 355-62)
Hom. E	no. XLV in Napier (1883, pp. 226-32)
Hom. F	in Priebsch (1899, pp. 135-8)

Manuscripts:

Add	Additional
BB	Book of Ballymote
Eg	Egerton
Harl	Harley/Harleian
LB	Leabhar Breac
LFF	Liber Flavus Fergusiorum
LH	Liber Hymnorum
LL	Lebor Laignech
LU	Lebor na hUidre
Rawl	Rawlinson
YBL	Yellow Book of Lecan

Libraries:

ALE	Advocates' Library Edinburgh (now: National Library Scotland)
BL	British Library (London)
BLO	Bodleian Library Oxford
BNP	Bibliothèque Natonale Paris
BRB	Bibliothèque Royale Bruxelles
NLI	National Library Ireland (Dublin)
NLS	National Library Scotland (Edinburgh)
RIA	Royal Irish Academy (Dublin)
TCD	Trinity College Dublin

Periodicals, series and books:

AB	Analecta Bollandiana
CCSL	Corpus Christianorum Series Latina
CMCS	Cambridge Medieval Celtic Studies
CSEL	Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum
DIL	Dictionary of the Irish Language
EC	Études Celtiques
EILS	Early Irish Law Series
HBS	Henry Bradshaw Society
IDB	Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible
ITS	Irish Texts Society
JBL	Journal of Biblical Literature
JIES	Journal of Indo-European Studies
JRSAI	Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland
JTS	Journal of Theological Studies

MGH/AA	Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Auctorum Antiquissimorum
MGH/SRM	Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Scriptorum rerum Merovingicarum
MMIS	Mediaeval and Modern Irish Series
PBA	Proceedings of the British Academy
PH	Passions and Homilies (Atkinson, 1887)
PHCC	Proceedings of the Harvard Celtic Colloquium
PL	Patrologiae Latinae
PMLA	Publications of the Modern Language Association of America
PRIA	Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy
RC	Revue Celtique
TLS	Todd Lecture Series
TOS	Transactions of the Ossianic Society
TRIA	Transactions of the Royal Irish Academy
ZCP	Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie

VAN CHAOS TOT VIJAND:
CONFRONTATIES MET MONSTERS
IN VROEGE IERSE TEKSTEN.
Een onderzoek met betrekking tot het kersteningsproces en het concept van het kwaad

Samenvatting

Onderwerp en methode

Het thema van dit onderzoek is 'confrontaties met monsters' in vroegmid-deleeuwse Ierse teksten. Met name narratieve teksten uit de periode van de vijfde tot (en met) de twaalfde eeuw zijn bestudeerd. Vanaf de vijfde eeuw zijn Ierse teksten in het Latijn (ook wel Hiberno-Latijn genoemd) geschreven en vanaf ongeveer de zevende eeuw werd de volkstaal, het Iers, gebruikt om dit soort teksten op schrift te stellen. Dit gebeurde in kloosters door kloosterlingen, maar het is tevens goed mogelijk dat de traditionele geleerde klassen — bijvoorbeeld de *filid*, 'dichter-geleerden' — ook een rol speelden bij het overdrachtsproces van orale kennis en kunst naar een geschreven vorm. De twaalfde eeuw markeert het einde van de periode die bestudeerd wordt: in deze eeuw kwamen continentale kloosterorden naar Ierland, die continentale normen meebrachten, waaraan de Ierse kerk steeds meer aangepast werd. Bovendien veranderde de politieke situatie door de Anglo-Normandische invasies, die eveneens gevolgen hadden voor kerkelijke zaken. Ierse en Hiberno-Latijnse teksten uit de twaalfde eeuw zijn in dit onderzoek verschillend behandeld, o.a. op grond van daterings-problemen. De teksten zijn moeilijk te dateren, maar voor de Ierse teksten geeft de taal nog enigszins een aanknopingspunt. In dit onderzoek zijn alleen die teksten opgenomen die gedateerd zijn in de twee perioden die zijn onderscheiden — Oudiers (tot in de tiende eeuw) en Middeliers (tot ongeveer 1200). Het onderzoek omvat dus teksten in de Ierse taal uit de twaalfde eeuw. Het dateringsprobleem in verband met Hiberno-Latijnse teksten is nog groter. Alleen die teksten die gedateerd zijn in de elfde eeuw of eerder zijn voorwerp van onderzoek; vaag of niet gedateerde teksten zijn buiten beschouwing gelaten. Bovendien zijn twaalfde eeuwse Hiberno-Latijnse teksten vaak producten van de eerder genoemde religieuze hervor-mingsbeweging of ze zijn geschreven als reactie op de politiek veranderde situatie. Zij overschrijden dus de eindmarkering van het onderzoek.

Het onderwerp van onderzoek zijn teksten waarin het thema 'de confrontatie met monsters' voorkomt. Om de grote hoeveelheid materiaal in te perken zijn iconografie en menselijke monsters niet opgenomen.

Onder monsters wordt in het onderzoek verstaan: dierlijke, gevaarlijke wezens, die een bovennatuurlijke en/of buitengewone dimensie hebben.

Het thema is onderzocht langs twee onderzoekslijnen. De eerste onderzoekslijn wordt gevormd door de vraag naar hoe aspecten van de kerstening terug te vinden zijn in vroegmiddeleeuwse Ierse teksten. De tweede onderzoekslijn richt zich op de ontwikkeling van het concept van het kwaad in de onderzochte teksten. De twee onderzoekslijnen hebben tot twee benaderingswijzen geleid: een bronnenonderzoek en een ideeënanalyse.

Het brede kader van de eerste onderzoekslijn naar het kersteningsproces in de literatuur is versmald tot een onderzoek naar de herkomst van monsters in de teksten die onderwerp van onderzoek zijn. De beschrijving van deze monsters is vergeleken met soortgelijke beschrijvingen in andere teksten: canonieke and niet-canonieke (bijbel)boeken, encyclopedische Latijnse literatuur zoals geschreven door Plinius de Oude en Isidorus van Sevilla, verwant Latijns (en Oudengels) materiaal, Hiberno-Latijnse, en Oud- en Middelierse teksten. Deze vergelijking is gemaakt om vast te kunnen stellen of er bronnen zijn gebruikt voor de beschrijving van de monsters en om zodoende de monsters te kunnen categoriseren als behorend tot de 'inheems Ierse', 'geïmporteerde' of 'geïntegreerde' soort. Een monster hoort tot de geïmporteerde klasse als de beschrijving ervan onveranderd overgenomen is uit een niet-Ierse bron. De andere twee klassen zijn Ierse typen monsters: als een monster voor het eerst of alleen in Ierse teksten beschreven is, wordt deze als 'inheems Iers' gecategoriseerd. De beschrijving van een monster van de 'geïntegreerde' soort is net als bij de 'geïmporteerde' soort gebaseerd op niet-Ierse bronnen, maar in dit geval is de beschrijving veranderd: karakteristieken (die misschien ook weer uit andere bronnen komen) zijn toegevoegd of op zodanige wijze gecombineerd dat een 'nieuw' monster tot stand gekomen is. De categorisering is uitgevoerd om uit te zoeken of en hoe christelijke ideeën van invloed zijn geweest op de symbolisering van het kwaad in de vorm van monsters.

In het kader van de tweede onderzoekslijn naar de analyse van het concept van het kwaad zijn er twee vormen van kwaad onderscheiden: ten eerste, non-moreel kwaad, en ten tweede, moreel kwaad. Non-moreel kwaad is schade die plaatsvindt zonder dat iemand dit opzettelijk teweegbrengt bij de slachtoffers. Moreel kwaad wordt gedefinieerd als bewust toegebrachte schade. Met behulp van deze onderscheiding tussen twee soorten kwaad is een hypothese opgesteld met de volgende inhoud: *monsters vertegenwoordigen in eerste instantie non-moreel kwaad, als chaosmachten. Wanneer christelijke invloed op de teksten toeneemt, schijnen de monsters een extra dimensie aan hun non-morele verschijning toegevoegd te krijgen. Ze gaan ook moreel kwaad personifiëren.* De hypothese is onmiddellijk voorzien van een nuancering, aangezien zij de indruk wekt dat er een dichotomie bestaat tussen de twee vormen van kwaad, terwijl deze twee soms in nauw verband met elkaar staan. Dit kan afgeleid worden uit het feit dat mensen non-moreel kwaad vaak interpreteren door er een plaats aan toe te kennen in hun wereldbeschouwing. Als zij dit doen, wordt soms

een nauw verband gelegd tussen non-moreel en moreel kwaad. Moreel kwaad kan dan beschouwd worden als de oorzaak van non-moreel kwaad. Met deze hypothese en nuancering als instrumenten is de rol van monsters in de teksten bestudeerd.

De grote hoeveelheid aan vroegmiddeleeuwse Ierse teksten over het thema 'de confrontatie met monsters' is door mij gereduceerd door classificatie en selectie. Ik heb de teksten ondergebracht in drie groepen en vervolgens heb ik daaruit drie representatieve teksten geselecteerd. De classificatie in drie groepen was gebaseerd op genre; ze resulteerde in een indeling in heroïsche, hagiografische en kosmologische/eschatologische teksten. De criteria die gebruikt zijn voor de selectie van de drie teksten waren: 1. de teksten moeten uit de Oudierse periode stammen; 2. de monsters moeten een symbolisch interessante rol spelen; 3. de teksten moeten voor de drie genres representatief zijn. De selectie leidde tot de keuze van de volgende drie teksten. Allereerst, het Oudierse *Avontuur van Fergus mac Leite* (vanaf nu: het *Avontuur*) uit de achtste eeuw vertegenwoordigt de heroïsche groep; het *Avontuur* beschrijft de ontmoeting en dodelijke strijd tussen koning Fergus mac Leite en een monster. Het hagiografische Hiberno-Latijnse *Leven van de heilige Columba* (vanaf nu: het *Leven*), dat tussen 697 en 704 afgerond werd door Adomnán de abt van Iona, is de tweede tekst. Het *Leven* laat de superioriteit van deze heilige over monsters zien. De derde tekst is de Oudierse *Brief van Jezus* (vanaf nu: de *Brief*), uit de negende of misschien de achtste eeuw. Daarin komen monsters voor als dienaren van Jezus Christus, die een goddelijke gebod per brief uit de hemel stuurt. Dit gebod houdt in dat de zondag geëerd moet worden; hiermee wordt dus een nieuwe orde ingevoerd. De monsters dienen als sancties bij dit gebod en zijn voorzien van eschatologische aspecten, die ook elders in deze tekst te ontdekken zijn. De twee onderzoekslijnen — de herkomst van de monsterbeschrijvingen en de ontwikkeling van het concept van het kwaad — worden hier nu achtereenvolgens separaat samengevat, waarbij eerst steeds de context en classificatie van elke tekst kort wordt aangeduid.

De drie teksten, de monsters daarin en de mogelijke bronnen

1. Het Avontuur van Fergus mac Leite

Wetteksten vormen de context van het *Avontuur*; de tekst zelf diende als precedent of casus voor een wettekst over de procedure van het beslagleggen op land. Het verhaal kan heel goed onafhankelijk van de wetteksten bestaan hebben. Dit lijkt gesuggereerd te worden door het feit dat het verhaal zelf naar variante versies van motieven verwijst. Het verhaal bestaat zowel in proza- als poëzievorm. Het is zeer waarschijnlijk dat deze twee versies een eenheid vormen. Ze komen uit dezelfde tijd en vullen elkaar aan. Het heroïsche verhaal is waarschijnlijk één van de *echtrai*, 'avonturen' of 'avontuurlijke reizen'. De oudst bekende titel karakteriseert het verhaal als zodanig. Een andere mogelijkheid is dat het verhaal een doodsverhaal (*aided*) is, aangezien een jongere versie op deze manier naar

het verhaal refereert. De twee genre-classificaties zijn allebei gerechtvaar-
digd door de inhoud: het gaat over de avonturen van koning Fergus die aan
het slot van het verhaal zijn dood vindt.

Het monster, waarmee de koning geconfronteerd wordt, is een *muir-
dris*, een watermonster. Het leeft in Loch Rudraige. Loch Rudraige heeft
men geïdentificeerd als Dundrum Bay. Dit is een inham van de zee die
bestaat uit een binnen- en buitenbaai. Misschien is het zo dat het beest
stekels heeft en lichaamsdelen die eruit zien als takken. Dit is een specu-
latie gebaseerd op het tweede deel van het samengestelde woord *muirdris*;
dris betekent 'doornstruik' en *muir* is 'zee'. Het beest wordt gekarakteri-
seerd door een voortdurend herhaalde beweging: het laat zich opzwellen en
trekt zich vervolgens weer samen, zoals de blaasbalg van een smid. Kijken
naar dit gruwelijke grote monster is gevaarlijk. Dit blijkt tijdens de eerste
confrontatie met het monster: als de koning het beest onder water ziet,
schrikt hij zo dat zijn gezicht misvormd raakt. Hij vlucht het water uit en
probeert verder te leven alsof er niets gebeurd is. Maar het Lot achterhaalt
hem in de vorm van een buitenlandse slavin. Zij wijst tijdens een conflict
op de smet die op de koning rust. Hij heeft zijn gezicht verloren. Nu is hij
gedwongen te handelen: hij doodt de slavin en zoekt een tweede confron-
tatie met het monster. Het gevecht dat volgt maakt een einde aan het leven
van zowel de koning als het monster. Er zijn geen bronnen gevonden die
invloed hebben uitgeoefend op de beschrijving van dit beest. Een opmerke-
lijke parallel is gevonden in het *Leven*, waarin een monster *aquatilis bestia*,
ofwel 'watermonster', genoemd wordt. Het Ierse equivalent van deze
terminologie is *píast uiscide*, en hiermee wordt de *muirdris* aangeduid. Het
monster in het heiligenleven is ook afschuwelijk, maar hier houden de
overeenkomsten op. Geconcludeerd kan worden dat de beschrijving van de
muirdris gecategoriseerd moet worden als behorend tot de inheems Ierse
soort.

2. Het Leven van de heilige Columba

De context van het *Leven* is de monastieke gemeenschap van het eiland
Iona: het werk is geschreven door de abt Adomnán op verzoek van de
monniken. De tekst behoort tot het genre van de hagiografie. Adomnán
beschrijft het leven van de heilige als een voorbeeld, dat de gelovigen
dienen na te volgen. Kerk-politieke zaken kunnen mogelijk ook aanleiding
geweest zijn tot het schrijven van de tekst. Het leven van de heilige wordt
niet chronologisch verteld; de wonderen die Columba verricht, zijn thema-
tisch geordend. Adomnán vond inspiratie in verschillende genres: de
klassieke biografie, christelijke hagiografie en vroegmiddeleeuwse Ierse
verhalen.

Vijf soorten monsters zijn te vinden in dit heiligenleven: een enorm
zeemonster, een monsterlijk wild zwijn, een riviermonster, slangen met
tongen die in drieën gevorkt zijn en angstaanjagende oceaanmonstertjes.

Het wonderbaarlijk reusachtige zeemonster leeft in de zeediepte. In de
hier relevante episode is het beest opgedoken. Het verrijst boven het
wateroppervlak als een berg. Twee confrontaties met dit monster vinden

plaats. Columba is op wonderbaarlijke wijze op de hoogte van het feit dat
het monster boven water is in de zee tussen de eilanden Iona en Tiree. Hij
beveelt daarom een monnik een omweg te maken. De monnik is echter
ongehoorzaam. Hij en de zeelui met wie hij vaart raken dodelijk verschrikt
als ze het monster zien. Het beest opent de mond, waardoor veel tanden
zichtbaar worden. Ze kunnen maar ternauwernood ontsnappen aan de
gevaarlijke deining die veroorzaakt wordt door het monster. Een tweede
monnik vertrekt in een boot, maar hij krijgt geen bevel van Columba. Als
het zeemonster zichtbaar wordt, schrikt het hele gezelschap aan boord
enorm, maar de monnik blijft onverschrokken. Hij zegent de zee en het
monster, waarop het beest in de diepte duikt. Het zeemonster kan gezien
worden tegen de algemene bijbelse achtergrond van reusachtige monsterlij-
ke zeeschepselen. Van specifieke bijbelse zeemonsters zoals Leviathan en
Jona's zeemonster is in het tweede hoofdstuk aangetoond dat zij ingebed
zijn in een complex symbolisch systeem, waarvan aspecten eveneens in de
voorstelling van het zeemonster Jasconius te ontwaren zijn. Dit monster
speelt een belangrijke rol in de Hiberno-Latijnse *Zeereis van de heilige abt
Brandaan*. Het zeemonster of de buik van het beest wordt verbonden met
(de buik van) de hel, de onderwereld, de afgrond, het hart van de aarde. In
Adomnáns beschrijving kan echter geen expliciete verwijzing naar deze
symboliek gevonden worden. Dit betekent niet dat Adomnán de beschrij-
ving verzonnen heeft. Er zijn wel degelijk karakteristieken die op bronnen
teruggevoerd kunnen worden. Hoewel Leviathan en het enorme zeemonster
de symbolische dimensie niet delen, hebben ze echter wel een aantal
kenmerken gemeen. In het bijbelse boek *Job* staat Leviathan beschreven als
een enorm zeemonster dat de zee laat koken. Wanneer het oprijst, worden
de engelen bang. Als Leviathans mond open is, worden vreeswekkende
tanden zichtbaar. Isidorus vertelt dat walvissen grote monsters zijn die
hoge golven veroorzaken. Nog belangrijker is zijn beschrijving van
zeemonsters. Hun enorme afmetingen worden vergeleken met bergen.
Twee bronnen van Isidorus bleken ook relevant te zijn. Dit is, ten eerste,
de *Naturalis Historia* van Plinius. Plinius verwijst naar reusachtige zee-
monsters die in de diepte leven en af en toe aan de oppervlakte komen.
Eén exemplaar dat aan land gespoeld was, bleek over een groot aantal
(honderdtwintig) tanden te beschikken. De tweede bron is de belangrijkste
tekst: de *Hexaemeron* van Ambrosius van Milaan. Hij vertelt over de
zeemonsters die immens zijn, zo groot als bergen. Ze leven in de diepte en
als ze opduiken aan de oppervlakte van het water, kunnen ze voor een
eiland aangezien worden. Dit gebeurt, tussen twee haakjes, met Jasconius.
Zeelui staan doodsangst uit als ze zo'n beest onder ogen krijgen. Dit laatste
is precies wat gebeurt in het *Leven*. Het monster wordt in het *Leven* met
een berg vergeleken: *instar montis*, 'als een berg'. Deze terminologie komt
ook voor in de *Aeneas* van Vergilius, daar toegepast op het paard van
Troje. De *Aeneas* was bekend in het oude Ierland en het is waarschijnlijk
dat Adomnán deze tekst eveneens kende. De Vulgaat en de *Etymologiae*
van Isidorus waren zeker bekend op Iona, de *Naturalis Historia* van Plinius
misschien en of het werk van Ambrosius er bekend was, is onduidelijk.
Het lijkt niet onwaarschijnlijk dat deze teksten, of althans sommige ervan,

gebruikt zijn als bronnen voor de beschrijving van het enorme zeemonster.
Adomnán nam echter niet één van deze beschrijvingen zomaar over: hij
gebruikte bepaalde gegevens en liet de symbolische dimensie, waarnaar
Isidorus bijvoorbeeld expliciet verwijst als hij Jona's zeemonster noemt,
weg. Adomnán past de details aan voor zijn hagiografie. Het enorme
zeemonster is een monster van de geïntegreerde soort, waarbij voor de
beschrijving geput is uit geïmporteerde bronnen.

Het monsterachtige wilde zwijn leeft in een woud op het eiland Skye.
Het is wonderbaarlijk groot. Een meute honden achtervolgt het beest, dat
recht op de heilige afstormt. Columba heft zijn heilige hand op, roept Gods
naam aan, bidt intens en beveelt de ever niet verder te naderen en op die
plaats te sterven. Het zwijn valt onmiddellijk dood neer. Verhalen over
bijzonder gevaarlijke wilde zwijnen, die soms in een woud leven en
waarbij hondenmeuten in dezelfde context gevonden kunnen worden,
komen voor in klassieke Latijnse teksten en in Middelierse tradities over de
held Finn mac Cumaill en zijn gezelschap. Het is waarschijnlijk dat
Adomnán klassieke voorbeelden van dit verhaalmotief kende. De grote
hoeveelheid aan Finn-teksten doet vermoeden dat het motief van het wilde
zwijn deel uitmaakte van het traditionele Ierse vertelgoed. De manier
waarop Adomnán erover vertelt, wijkt echter af van de verhaallijn in zowel
de klassieke als de Middelierse teksten. Het is nu niet meer mogelijk vast
te stellen waar de wortels van de episode over Columba's wonder liggen:
in de klassieke, in de Ierse traditie of in allebei. Het is wel duidelijk dat
het heroïsche motief van een confrontatie met een monsterachtig everzwijn
gekerstend is. In plaats van een held of een groep helden is het een heilige
die het beest ontmoet. In plaats van het gebruik van wapens of enige
andere soort van fysiek geweld worden heilige gebaren en woorden
aangewend tijdens de confrontatie. Het heroïsche materiaal is omgevormd
naar een hagiografisch model. Een vergelijking van de hagiografische
episode met heroïsche parallellen levert, naast de overeenkomsten, een
interessant contrastbeeld op. Het monsterachtige everzwijn is een monster
van de geïntegreerde soort. Het is niet mogelijk vast te stellen of Adomnán
inspiratie putte uit de inheemse orale traditie of uit de klassieke verhalen.

Het woeste snelle watermonster leeft in de Ness en maakt deze rivier
levensgevaarlijk. Het heeft een man uit het volk van de Picten doodgebeten
en loert in de diepte op een nieuwe prooi. Als het aanvalt, duikt het met
open mond op aan de wateroppervlakte. Brullend zwemt het op een nieuw
slachtoffer af. Dit is hier een monnik van Columba, die als vrijwilliger in
de gevaarlijke rivier is gesprongen om een boot te halen. Aan de oever
staat iedereen — Picten en monniken — verstijfd van angst. Columba heft
zijn heilige hand op, slaat het kruisteken en roept Gods naam aan. Hij
beveelt het beest niet verder te naderen, de man niet aan te raken en snel
om te keren. Het beest vlucht dodelijk geschrokken razendsnel weg. Een
variant van dit verhaal is te vinden in het Middelierse *Leven van Colum
Cille* (Colum Cille is de Ierse naam van Columba). Vanaf deze tekst leidde
het spoor terug naar een bron, die waarschijnlijk ook voor het *Leven*
gebruikt is: de *Dialogen* van Sulpicius Severus. Hierin wordt een soortge-
lijk wonder verteld. Een groep mensen arriveert bij een rivier, waarin zich

een slang bevindt die dreigend op de groep komt afzwemmen. St. Martinus van Tours verdrijft het slechte beest door een heilige spreuk te uiten. Adomnán heeft op dit verhaal voortgeborduurd toen hij vertelde over hoe St. Columba het gevaarlijke riviermonster verdreef door heilige gebaren en woorden te gebruiken. Het riviermonster behoort dus tot de geïntegreerde soort monsters aangezien een Latijnse hagiografische bron als basis gediend heeft voor de episode.

De slangen leven op Iona. Hun tongen zijn gevorkt in drieën en ze zijn giftig. Als Columba zijn eind nabij weet en dit aan de monniken vertelt, zijn deze zeer bedroefd. Hij probeert hen te troosten en heft allebei zijn heilige handen op en zegent het eiland. Hij zegt dat vanaf dat moment het gif van slangen onschadelijk zal zijn voor de mensen en het vee op het eiland, zolang de bewoners zich aan de geboden van Christus zullen houden. Het motief van Columba's macht over slangen kan teruggevoerd worden op de bijbel: verschillende voorbeelden uit de Vulgaat zijn aangevoerd waarin God of Jezus Christus macht over slangen verlenen aan mensen die hen gehoorzamen. De meest verwante parallel is het verhaal over Paulus die niet gedood wordt door het gif van de slang die hem bijt op het eiland Malta. De niet-canonieke tekst genaamd de *Levens van de Profeten* beschrijft eveneens de macht van een heilige man over slangen: Jeremia's gebed verdrijft slangen. Dit is enigszins anders dan het wonder dat hier centraal staat: Columba's zegen maakt slangen onschadelijk. Het aspekt van de in drieën gevorkte tongen komt uit klassieke teksten: Adomnán gebruikte werken van Vergilius (de *Aeneas* en/of de *Georgica*) en/of de *Naturalis Historia* van Plinius als bron. Deze twee soorten bronnen — bijbelse en klassieke — maken duidelijk dat de slangen monsters van de geïntegreerde soort zijn.

De oceaanmonstertjes leven in de noordelijke oceaan waar nooit mensen komen en vanwaar geen terugkeer mogelijk is. De beestjes zijn nog nooit eerder gezien. In hun gezelschap bevinden zich andere monsters, maar Adomnán beschrijft deze niet. De zeer afschuwelijke en buitengewoon gevaarlijke beestjes zijn bijna onverdraaglijk. Ze zijn lelijk, monsterlijk, bijna onbeschrijflijk en vreeswekkend. Ze zijn zo klein als kikkers. Met hun bijzonder vervelende angels vallen ze de platte uiteinden van de roeiriemen en de boot van Cormac en zijn reisgenoten aan. Cormac is een pelgrim en een monnik van Columba. Deze weet door zijn wonderbaarlijke profetische kennis van het grote gevaar waarin Cormac en de zijnen zich bevinden. De reizigers zijn bijzonder angstig en in tranen bidden zij God om hulp. Columba verzamelt de monniken door de klok te laten luiden. In het oratorium bidden zij, eveneens tranen vergietend, dat God de wind van richting verandert. Dan kondigt Columba aan dat nu een noordenwind waait en dat de reizigers spoedig op Iona zullen arriveren. Columba heeft dus niet alleen profetische kennis, maar kan ook in naam van Jezus Christus de winden en de oceaan bevelen, concludeert Adomnán. Het is mogelijk dat Adomnán inspiratie haalde uit beschrijvingen van waterbeesten uit de werken van Plinius en Isidorus, maar dit is niet aantoonbaar. De woonplaats van de kleine monsters — een oceaan ver weg waar niemand ooit komt — lijkt op de woonplaats van de grote monsters, die Ambrosius

aangewezen heeft: zij leven voorbij de grenzen van de bekende wereld. De beschrijving van de angels die bijzonder vervelend zijn kan overgenomen zijn van Isidorus, die over de *scinifes*, een soort steekvliegen, vertelt dat zij één van de Tien Plagen van Egypte zijn. Zij hebben zulke angels. Isidorus gebruikt precies hetzelfde woordenpaar: *aculeís permolestae* 'bijzonder vervelend door (hun) angels'. Op zijn beurt heeft hij weer gebruik gemaakt van de *Twee Boeken van Instructie* van Eucherius van Lyon. Of dit laatste werk op Iona bekend was, is niet zeker. Adomnáns opmerking dat de monstertjes nooit eerder zijn gezien, heeft mogelijk de bedoeling om aan te tonen hoe buitengewoon het avontuur van Cormac en zijn gezelschap was. Details uit hoofdstuk drie lijken er echter op te wijzen, dat met deze uitdrukking ook bedoeld kan zijn dat dit helse beestjes zijn. Met die betekenis komt ze voor in Latijnse en Oudengelse Zondags- teksten. De locatie in een noordelijke oceaan zou ook op een helse omge- ving kunnen duiden. Immers, in de *Zeereis van de heilige abt Brandaan* arriveren Brandaan en zijn broeders in een helse zee wanneer ze in het noorden varen. De beesten uit de *Zeereis van de boot van de Uí Chorra*, die een variant van deze kleine monsters zijn, leven eveneens in een helse omgeving: een vurige zee. Deze karakteristieken zijn echter niet expliciet in Adomnáns tekst. Daarom kan niet geconcludeerd worden dat met het zinnetje 'nooit eerder gezien' een hels aspect bedoeld is. De oceaanmons- tertjes zijn van de geïntegreerde soort: hun angels zijn waarschijnlijk gebaseerd op de angels van de *scinifes* uit het werk van Isidorus en/of Eucherius en hun woonplaats is mogelijk afgeleid van de woonplaats van de grote zeemonsters in de *Hexaemeron* van Ambrosius.

3. De Brief van Jezus

De Ierse *Brief* is één van de vele versies van de Zondagsbrief, een tekst die wijd verspreid — van Ethiopië tot IJsland — in vele talen voorkomt. Voor het eerst werd naar deze tekst verwezen in de zesde eeuw in wat nu Spanje is en sporen ervan waren in de twintigste eeuw nog te vinden. Duitse soldaten, gesneuveld in de Eerste Wereldoorlog, zijn gevonden met exemplaren van de Zondagsbrief op hun borst. De Zondagsbrief is een gekerstende vorm van het Sabbatsgebod. Het Sabbatsgebod is door God (of door Mozes) opgeschreven op stenen tafelen op de berg Sinaï. De Zon- dagsbrief is door Jezus Christus in de hemel geschreven met zijn bloed of met gouden letters. De Brief is vervolgens door engelen naar de aarde gebracht naar een heilige plaats. Al naar gelang de versie verschilt deze plaats: Rome, Jeruzalem, Bethlehem en andere heilige plaatsen worden genoemd. De inhoud van de Brief is het gebod om de zondag te eren. Gehoorzaamheid zal beloond worden, ongehoorzaamheid gestraft. Vooral aan de straffen wordt veel aandacht gewijd. De tekst is een pseudo-epi- graaf: de Brief is op naam gezet van een beroemd of heilig persoon, in dit geval Jezus Christus. De tekst is van kosmologische en eschatologische aard: een nieuwe orde wordt ingesteld en geponeerd wordt dat deze nieuwe orde een rol vervult in Gods plan met de tijd. In de Brief wordt verwezen naar de Schepping (het begin), de Opstanding (het midden) en het Oordeel

(het einde van de tijd). De Brief heeft in aanzienlijke mate gebruik gemaakt van ideeën uit bijbelse en niet-canonieke tradities.

De monsters die in de Ierse *Brief* beschreven worden, functioneren als goddelijke straffen. Als men de zondag niet eert, dienen zij als sanctie. Vijf soorten worden genoemd: *brucha*, sprinkhanen, een vurig paard, vliegende slangen en vijf afschuwelijke hellemonsters.

In het verleden is de eerste monstersoort naar de mensheid gestuurd om hen te straffen voor het niet eren van de zondag. De *brucha* leven in het Oosten. Hun haren zijn ijzeren stekels en ze hebben vurige ogen. Ze gaan de wijngaarden in en breken de ranken af, die op de grond vallen. De *brucha* rollen door de druiven, zodat het fruit aan hun stekels blijft steken. Zo dragen ze de druiven mee naar hun woonplaatsen. Het Ierse woord *bruch* komt van het Latijnse *bruchus*, dat 'vleugelloze sprinkhaan' betekent. Een belangrijk deel van de karakteristieken van de *brucha* moet gezien worden tegen de achtergrond van bijbelse sprinkhaanplagen, met name zoals in de *Psalmen* naar de Tien Plagen verwezen wordt. De Tien Plagen zijn een bijzondere vorm van goddelijke straffen, die plaatsvonden in het verleden in het Oosten (gezien vanuit Ierland, maar ook vanuit Rome, waar het origineel van de Ierse brief terechtkwam). De karakteristieken 'vurig' en 'van ijzer' zouden gezien kunnen worden als eschatologisch strafmateriaal zoals beschreven in apocalyptische canonieke en niet-canonieke teksten. De Vulgaat biedt verder aanknopingspunten voor de stekels van de beesten (*Jeremia*) en voor de wijngaarden die door hen verwoest worden (*Joël*). In Latijnse Zondagsbrieven en in Oudengelse Zondagspreken komen respectievelijk vleugelloze sprinkhanen en kevers voor als goddelijke straffen voor het niet eren van de zondag. Deze teksten bieden verder soms parallellen voor de aspecten 'straf uit het verleden' en 'herkomst uit het Oosten'. Maar deze Zondagsteksten geven geen vergelijkbare elementen voor de vurige ogen en ijzeren stekels. De ingenieuze handeling met druiven is evenmin in deze verwante teksten te vinden. De vleugelloze sprinkhanen (Latijn) verwoesten de vegetatie en de kevers (Oudengels) vernietigen de wouden. In één Oudengelse Zondagspreek nemen zij het voedsel van de mensen weg. Bronnen over egels geven een parallel voor de opgeprikte druiven die weggedragen worden. De egel wordt zo beschreven door Plinius, Isidorus, de *Physiologus* en een (Hiberno?-)Latijnse glos op de *Psalmen*. De *brucha* bestaan dus uit aspecten die grotendeels herleid kunnen worden tot details uit geïmporteerde teksten. De combinatie van vleugelloze sprinkhaan en egel is echter uniek: dit komt alleen voor in de Ierse versie van de Zondagsbrief. Er is bovendien geen bron gevonden voor de ijzeren stekels. Deze monstersoort moet daarom ingedeeld worden bij de geïntegreerde klasse.

De tweede monstersoort zijn eveneens sprinkhanen afkomstig uit het Oosten, maar deze beesten hebben ijzeren vleugels. Deze klemmen ze rond alles dat ze tegenkomen. Ze gaan bovendien het graan in en snijden de aren af, die op de grond vallen. Ook de vleugelhebbende sprinkhanen moeten tegen de bijbelse achtergrond van sprinkhanenplagen gezien worden. Vooral de sprinkhanenplaag uit de Tien Plagen van Egypte is van belang. De Vulgaat en niet-canonieke teksten beschrijven deze oostelijke

ramp, en tarwe kan gevonden worden onder de gewassen die als hun prooi genoemd worden. Maar de gevleugelde sprinkhanen uit deze bronnen hebben geen ijzeren vleugels. Een (Hiberno?-)Latijnse glos op de *Psalmen* beschrijft, in de context van de Tien Plagen, tarwe en met name de aren als dat wat de sprinkhaan verwoest. Deze glos zegt echter dat de sprinkhaan (*locusta*) geen vleugels heeft, terwijl ze aan de vleugelloze sprinkhaan (*bruchus*) vurige vleugels toeschrijft. Vleugelloze en vleugelhebbende sprinkhanen hebben ijzeren klauwen volgens de *Cosmographia*, maar deze tekst is verder zo duister dat er geen conclusies uit getrokken kunnen worden. IJzer moet bij deze tweede monstersoort waarschijnlijk eveneens als eschatologisch strafmateriaal gezien worden, zoals ook bij de *brucha* geconcludeerd werd. In de *Psalmen* worden vleugelloze en vleugelhebbende sprinkhanen samen genoemd, evenals in de *Brief* de ene soort vlak voor de andere beschreven wordt. Hetzelfde kan geconstateerd worden in verband met de Latijnse en Oudengelse Zondagsteksten: de twee groepen beesten worden in het algemeen samen genoemd (al heten ze in de Oudengelse preken kevers en sprinkhanen). Maar het kenmerk 'ijzeren vleugels' is in deze verwante teksten niet te vinden: dit lijkt iets specifiek Iers. De sprinkhanen horen daarom tot de geïntegreerde klasse monsters: er zijn bronnen aanwijsbaar die voor hun beschrijving gebruikt zijn, maar ze hebben tegelijk het kenmerk 'ijzeren vleugels' dat uniek is en alleen in de Ierse Zondagsbrief gevonden wordt.

De derde monstersoort is oorspronkelijk een gewoon dier, maar door een zondagszonde wordt het getransformeerd tot een bovennatuurlijk beest. Ieder paard dat op zondag bereden wordt, wordt een vurig paard tussen de dijen van de ruiter in de hel. Het idee dat men gestraft wordt op een manier die overeenkomt met de zonde kan in een notedop in de Vulgaat gevonden worden. Dit idee is verder uitgewerkt in niet-canonieke geschriften zoals de *Openbaring van Petrus* en de *Openbaring van Paulus*. In dit soort visionaire teksten wordt de hel getoond aan degene die het visioen krijgt en deze persoon krijgt uitgelegd dat de gestrafte zielen op een manier gemarteld worden die in overeenstemming is met wat zij misdaan hebben. Redactie VI van de *Openbaring van Paulus* beschrijft een soortgelijke maar niet dezelfde straf: brandende mensen zitten op een koperen knol, koperen lastdieren en andere viervoeters in de hel. De zonde die zo gestraft wordt, verschilt van de zonde genoemd in de *Brief*: deze mensen stalen de betreffende dieren. Alle andere Redacties en de *Openbaring van Paulus* zelf zijn gepreoccupeerd door de zondag: het idee dat zielen op zondag niet gestraft worden in de hel (dat ook in de *Brief* voorkomt) is een centraal motief in deze teksten. Redactie VI wijkt hiervan af: de auteur lijkt niet in de zondag geïnteresseerd te zijn. Deze tekst — mogelijk een tijdgenoot van de *Brief* en Iers — biedt een variante versie. Een latere Middelierse tekst, de *Zeereis van de boot van de Uí Chorra*, combineert de motieven uit de *Brief* en Redactie VI: een man rijdt op een vurig paard in een vurige helse zee omdat hij dit dier stal en er op zondag op reed. De Latijnse Brieven en de Oudengelse preken geven geen parallel. In de Latijnse Brieven vertegenwoordigen paarden vijandige (Saraceense) legers. De Oudengelse preken borduren voort op het bijbelse Sabbatsgebod, waarin lastdieren, ossen en

ezels vrijgesteld worden van werk op de sabbat. De Oudengelse preken noemen de schreeuw van viervoetige dieren, wat een parallel heeft in de tranen van ossen en slaven in de Ierse *Brief*, omdat zij moeten werken op zondag. Het paard wijkt in de Vulgaat van dit patroon af: het wordt niet beschreven als een beest dat vrijgesteld wordt van werk op de sabbat, maar symboliseert in het algemeen een oorlogsmacht. Het vurige paard moet gecategoriseerd worden als een monster van de geïntegreerde soort, maar opgemerkt dient te worden dat de Ierse bijdrage aan de vormgeving van dit beest aanzienlijk is: er zijn geen bronnen waarin dit soort vurige helse paarden te vinden is. De Ierse auteur baseerde dit soort monster of op een nu verloren gegane bron (misschien een Redactie van de *Openbaring van Paulus*) of creëerde dit beest, geïnspireerd door het idee van de correspondentie tussen zonde en straf, dat in notedop gevonden kan worden in de Vulgaat en uitgewerkt is in de niet-canonieke openbaringen. Het feit dat noch de *Openbaring van Paulus* noch de Redacties daarvan een zondagszonde beschrijven pleit ervoor dat de straf van het vurige paard een creatieve bijdrage van de Ierse auteur aan de *Zondagsbrief* is geweest.

De vierde monstersoort wordt in één adem genoemd met andere goddelijke straffen. Als de mensheid de zondag niet eert, zullen er hevige stormen, veel vurige bliksems, donder en zwavelvuur komen, waardoor families en volken zullen verbranden. Zware steenhagelstormen, vliegende slangen en niet-christelijke volken zullen komen. De mensen zullen door de niet-christelijke volken als gevangenen uit hun land weggevoerd en aan vreemde Goden geofferd worden. De bijbel is waarschijnlijk een belangrijke bron voor deze monstersoort: vliegende slangen worden twee keer als goddelijke straf in *Jesaja* genoemd. De woordkeus van de Oudlatijnse vertaling (Vetus Latina) — *serpentes pennati*, 'gevleugelde slangen' — komt overeen met de terminologie gebruikt in de Latijnse Brieven: *serpentes pinnati/pinnatae*. Bijzonder slecht weer en invasies van vreemde volken, die mensen meenemen als gevangenen in ballingschap, zijn eveneens te karakteriseren als bijbelse goddelijke straffen. De vliegende slangen dienen gezien te worden tegen de achtergrond van het algemene bijbelse idee dat met name in het Oude Testament gevonden wordt: Gods vloek voor hen die Gods geboden niet gehoorzamen en Gods zegen voor hen die dat wel doen. Deze 'Oude Testament lijn' is ook te vinden in de Latijnse en Oudengelse Zondagsteksten, waarin soms van de slangen gezegd wordt dat zij vliegen en vaak worden in dezelfde context de buitenlandse vijanden en het buitengewone slechte weer genoemd. Deze teksten vertonen tevens een nieuw motief: slangen (of beesten) dreigen mensenborsten te verslinden of eraan te zuigen. In de Oudengelse preken wordt het geslacht van de slachtoffers niet genoemd, in de Latijnse teksten zijn de slachtoffers vrouwen. De slangen bestraffen zondagszonden, die soms gespecificeerd worden als het verzamelen van groente uit de tuin of het hebben van geslachtsgemeenschap op zondagnacht. Dit nieuwe motief is herleid naar niet-canonieke teksten zoals de *Openbaring van Petrus*, de *Openbaring van Paulus*, de Griekse *Openbaring van Ezra*, het Latijnse *Visoen van Ezra*, en de Ethiopische *Openbaring van de Maagd Maria*. De hierin genoemde slangen (of beesten), die dienen als goddelijke straf in de

hel, zijn niet gevleugeld. De zonden die zij bestraffen, zijn voornamelijk abortus, infanticide en/of ongeoorloofde sex. De correspondentie tussen zonde en straf is hier eveneens te ontwaren: vrouwen die de melk van hun borsten misgunnen aan kinderen tijdens hun leven worden gemarteld door slangen/beesten die hun borsten verslinden of eraan zuigen in de hel. In de Latijnse en Oudengelse Zondagsteksten is dit idee aanwezig in het motief van babies die met gebrekken geboren worden, wat volgens de teksten het resultaat is van sexuele gemeenschap op zondag. Deze 'niet-canonieke lijn' is ook aanwezig in Ierse teksten: nonnen (in de mogelijk Ierse Redactie XI van de *Openbaring van Paulus*) en clerus (het *Visioen van Adomnán*, het *Testament van Maria*) ondergaan een variante versie van deze straf. Hun zonde is echter niet sexueel: de nonnen en de clerus in het *Visioen van Adomnán* verwaarloosden spirituele plichten en de clerus in het *Testament van Maria* was onwetend omtrent spirituele plichten. In de *Brief* zijn de slangen niet verbonden met een sexuele zonde, noch wordt er iets over het geslacht van hun slachtoffers gezegd. De vliegende slangen horen tot de geïntegreerde soort monsters: ze kunnen herleid worden naar goddelijke straffen uit het Oude Testament. Indien ze beschreven waren op dezelfde manier als de vliegende slangen in *Jesaja*, dan zou men kunnen beargumenteren dat ze tot de geïmporteerde soort horen. De *Brief* beschrijft ze echter in meer algemene termen dan de specifieke bijbelse beschrijving, waarin ze of tot de woestijngevaren horen, of symbool van oordeel en verwoesting zijn. De bestraffing door vliegende slangen is bovendien in een zondagscontext gezet.

De vijfde monstersoort bevindt zich in de diepten van de hel. Het zijn vijf grote, afschuwelijke monsters, die ernaar verlangen om naar de mensheid op aarde te gaan en dan de zondag te wreken. Gods genade houdt hen echter tegen. Hoewel deze monsters op het eerste gezicht niets te maken lijken te hebben met sprinkhanen, heeft studie van verschillende teksten aangetoond, dat ze waarschijnlijk als de monsterlijke sprinkhanen uit de *Openbaring van Johannes* geïnterpreteerd moeten worden. Als de vijfde bazuin geklonken heeft, zal de vijfde engel de put van de afgrond (een equivalent van de hel) openen. Rook stijgt op en de zon en lucht worden verduisterd. De sprinkhanen die uit de afgrond komen, zullen gedurende vijf maanden op aarde zijn en de mensen straffen die het teken van God niet op hun voorhoofd hebben. Ze zijn afschuwelijk en mogelijk zo groot als paarden. Dit alles zal aan het Einde van de Tijd plaatsvinden, hetgeen in de *Brief* misschien weergegeven wordt door de opmerking dat de monsters nu door Gods genade tegengehouden worden. In een aantal Latijnse Brieven worden beesten genoemd, die nooit eerder gezien zijn. In dezelfde context worden apocalyptische tekens, zoals duisternis en luid geweeklaag, beschreven. Eén Latijnse Brief voegt karakteristieken toe die duidelijk maken dat het hier om beesten gaat, die een variante versie van de sprinkhanen uit de *Openbaring* zijn. De Oudengelse preek aangeduid als B, die parallellen geeft van vier van de vijf monstersoorten uit de *Brief*, beschrijft in dit geval een monstersoort die in nauw verband met de Ierse monsters staat. In het verleden zijn vijf beesten uit de zee opgerezen (de zee is op symbolische wijze verbonden met het dodenrijk en de hel) en zij

straften de mensen omdat zij de zondag niet eerden. Toen zij op het punt stonden de mensheid te doen omkomen, maakte God genadig een eind aan deze bestraffing. Een andere Oudengelse preek, niet over de zondag maar over de Antichrist, vermeldt afschuwelijke grote beesten die uit de hel zullen komen naar de aarde om de mensen te straffen in de tijd van de Antichrist. De beschrijving van de beesten in deze preek borduurt duidelijk voort op het motief van de monsterlijke sprinkhanen uit de *Openbaring*, en zij hebben verder kenmerken gemeen met de verwante beesten uit de Latijnse Brieven en de Ierse *Brief*. De vijf helse monsters zijn daarom monsters van de geïntegreerde soort: ze kunnen teruggevoerd worden op de monsterlijke sprinkhanen uit de *Openbaring*, maar ze zijn niet onveranderd overgenomen. In hun beschrijving zijn sommige details toegevoegd en andere weggelaten. De ontwikkeling van de sprinkhanen in de *Openbaring* tot monsters in de *Brief* is nu niet langer na te speuren: misschien speelde één of meer verloren gegane Zondagsteksten daarbij een rol.

In deze drie teksten is dus slechts één inheems Iers monster te vinden: de *muirdris* die in de heroïsche tekst voorkomt. De patronen die een rol spelen in het *Avontuur* zijn daarom bijzonder belangrijk voor de vergelijking met de twee andere teksten, die doordrenkt zijn van christelijke ideeën en voor de conclusies over de ontwikkeling van het concept van het kwaad in de drie teksten.

De monsters en het kwaad

De *muirdris* is geclassificeerd als de vertegenwoordiging van non-moreel kwaad. Het is mogelijk dat het monster de gevaarlijke beweging van water personifieert. Het beest valt zowel binnen als buiten de menselijke orde. Aan de ene kant bevindt het zich in Loch Rudraige, dat deel uitmaakt van het koninkrijk van koning Fergus mac Leite. Het water is bovendien genoemd naar een voorouder van Fergus. Aan de andere kant is het Fergus verboden dit water in te gaan. Dit verbod wordt een *geis*, een taboe, genoemd. Het taboe is opgelegd door kleine wezentjes, die met water worden geassocieerd. Zij kunnen gezien worden als vertegenwoordigers van de Andere Werkelijkheid en ze beschikken over bijzondere kennis: ze geven Fergus een tovermiddel waarmee hij onder water kan gaan en via het taboe maken ze hem duidelijk dat Loch Rudraige voor hem gevaarlijk is. Het non-morele kwaad (het gevaar in het water) is nauw verbonden met moreel kwaad. Koning Fergus breekt zijn taboe (hij gaat het verboden water in) en hij overtreedt de regels verbonden met het koningschap. De vervorming van zijn gezicht, veroorzaakt door de schok die hij kreeg toen hij de *muirdris* voor het eerst zag, is een teken dat Fergus niet langer geschikt is als koning. De smet op zijn gezicht bezoedelt het koningschap, dat in de vroegmiddeleeuwse Ierse teksten als sacraal wordt beschouwd. Een koning hoort bovendien niet te vluchten als gevaar dreigt, maar te vechten. De waarheid over de smet wordt eerst uitgesproken door een mannelijke bediende, de wagenmenner van de koning, maar de elite aan het hof neemt een ander besluit dan men zou verwachten. De koning wordt niet afgezet. De eerste confrontatie met het monster veroorzaakt chaos: de

sociale en sacrale structuur van de samenleving is uit balans geraakt. De verstoring van de orde zet het Lot in werking, dat verloopt volgens een bepaalde wetmatigheid en een zekere grilligheid. Het Lot zal de balans herstellen, maar wanneer en hoe is onzeker. In dit geval duurt het een poos (drie of zeven jaar, de twee handschriften verschillen) voordat het Lot 'toeslaat'. Een tweede keer wordt uitgesproken dat de koning niet langer een ware koning is, omdat hij 'zijn gezicht verloren heeft'. Nu is het een persoon met een nog lagere status dan de wagenmenner die dit zegt: een buitenlandse slavin. Zij zou beschouwd kunnen worden als een instrument van het Lot, net als het monster. Het monster veroorzaakt een zichtbaar teken op het gezicht van de koning als bewijs van zijn overtreding. De slavin spreekt de waarheid uit, terwijl alle andere betrokkenen stil zijn. De elite kiest ervoor de waarheid niet te zien en de lagere klassen en de koning zelf worden stil gehouden doordat de waarheid voor hen verborgen wordt gehouden. Het Lot achterhaalt Fergus. De tweede confrontatie met het monster vindt plaats en dit brengt voor drie personages de dood met zich mee: voor de slavin, het monster en de koning. Ondanks de tragedie is de balans nu hersteld: de koning wiens koningschap niet langer op waarheid/rechtvaardigheid (*fír*, een centraal concept in vroegmiddeleeuwse Ierse literatuur) gebaseerd is, is geen koning meer.

Het monster wordt gedood met kracht en geweld. De oorsprong van dit soort kwaad wordt in dit verhaal niet verklaard. Als mijn interpretatie van het monster als personificatie van de gevaarlijke beweging van water juist is, is dit begrijpelijk. Een dergelijk kwaad hoort bij het bestaan: het is één van de gevaren van de natuur. Als de natuur beschouwd wordt als de schepping van een goede en persoonlijke God, dan is de oorsprong van dit soort kwaad een nijpend probleem. Waarom schiep deze God zo'n gevaarlijke wereld? Men moet in dit geval een reden of een verklaring voor deze existentiële feiten vinden. Als het geloof in een goede, persoonlijke God die een gevaarlijke natuur schiep niet voorhanden is, dan is het probleem om dit soort kwaad te verklaren minder nijpend. Of er nu wel of niet geloof is in een persoonlijk God, er zijn chaosmachten waar mensen geen greep op hebben en waarover zij geen macht hebben, maar waaraan zij onderworpen zijn. Men kan proberen sacrale regels te formuleren om deze chaotische krachten die het leven bedreigen te hanteren. In het geval van het verhaal over Fergus wordt dit gedaan, wanneer de *geis* wordt opgelegd aan de koning. Er zijn gevaren in het leven die vermeden kunnen worden, als men weet waar ze te vinden zijn. Misschien heeft de keus van Loch Rudraige als plaats van handeling een bepaalde betekenis. Er kan een boodschap verbonden met het verleden mee bedoeld zijn. Het water is genoemd naar een voorvader (Rudraige) van Fergus die in dit water verdronk. (In een latere versie verdrinkt Fergus eveneens.) Een andere mogelijkheid is dat deze keus een boodschap over de plaats van de mens in de kosmos bevat. Het water ligt in het koninkrijk van Fergus, maar dit betekent niet dat het ook in zijn macht is. Er zijn grenzen aan menselijke macht. Er zijn gevaren waartegenover de mens met lege handen en machteloos staat. Fergus echter pakt uiteindelijk op heroïsche wijze zijn zwaard in zijn hand en maakt een eind aan het leven van het monster. Het water,

weliswaar rood van het bloed van de slachtoffers van het gevecht, is er nog steeds. Het gevaar dat het monster mogelijk personifieert, bestaat voort. Het zou alleen uit de weg geruimd kunnen worden, als het water verwijderd werd. Maar zonder water is leven onmogelijk. Dit is niet alleen een voorbeeld van het ambivalente karakter van water, maar ook in een bredere zin van de natuur: levengevend en doodbrengend. Het ambivalente karakter van water is een rode draad in het verhaal over de koning: eerst wordt hij bedreigd met verdrinkingsdood door de kleine waterwezentjes, die hem willen ontvoeren en hem zijn zwaard afnemen. Vervolgens geven zij hem een tovermiddel waarmee hij onder water kan gaan. Als hij tenslotte het enige water dat hem verboden is ingaat, valt de schaduw van het Lot op zijn gezicht. Uiteindelijk vindt hij zijn einde in dat verboden water.

De monsters in het *Leven* vertegenwoordigen non-moreel kwaad. Ze kunnen gezien worden als extrapolaties van gevaren die in de natuur voorkomen: in water en op land. Ze dienen als instrumenten om de superioriteit en heiligheid te tonen van Columba en van hetgeen hij vertegenwoordigt: de God van de nieuwe religie. Het non-morele kwaad dat de monsters vertegenwoordigen staat in een kader van lessen over moreel goed en kwaad. Geloof, vertrouwen, gehoorzaamheid en solidariteit zijn het moreel goede dat in de episodes belicht wordt; ongehoorzaamheid en ongeloof zijn moreel slecht. Moreel kwaad wordt ook in andere dan de monster-episodes in het heiligenleven beschreven. Dit soort kwaad wordt vaak toegeschreven aan druïden, rovers en andere slechteriken. Zij worden geïnspireerd door de personificatie van moreel kwaad: de Duivel en demonen. Het non-morele kwaad 'ziekte' wordt eveneens aan de Duivel en demonen toegeschreven. De monsters worden echter nooit door de Boze gestuurd. Adomnán zegt over kwaad veroorzaakt door demonische machten dat dit gebeurt terwijl God het toestaat. Er is dus geen extreem dualisme: God blijft de machtigste en heeft de heerschappij over de schepping. Deze visie op macht toont de uitweg uit al het gevaar dat het leven met zich meebrengt: God is degene die zal helpen, als men vertrouwt, gelooft en gehoorzaamt.

Dit is verbonden met één van de doelen van hagiografie: het presenteren van een voorbeeld hoe te leven. Als men dus oog in oog met monsters staat, moet men heilige gebaren maken (zoals een kruis slaan) en heilige woorden uitspreken (Gods naam aanroepen, bidden en een bevel geven). Om hiertoe in staat te zijn moet men wel heilige kalmte en perfect geloof hebben. Dit is niet voor allen mogelijk. Het *Leven* geeft daarom ook voorbeelden van hulp geboden door de heilige: men moet het advies van de heilige opvolgen (dit geldt voor de monniken in de episode over het grote zeemonster). Als men in de aanwezigheid van een heilige is, kan men zeker zijn van de bescherming geboden door deze sacrale persoon (zoals de monnik in de episode over het riviermonster ondervindt). Maar zelfs als de heilige niet aanwezig is, kan hulp geboden worden (zoals aan de reizigers in de episode over de oceaanmonstertjes). De meerderheid van de gevaren, die de monsters veroorzaken, wordt niet beëindigd: ze zijn deel van de gevaren van het leven of van de schepping. Een groot gevaar moet soms

vermeden worden (de eerste confrontatie met het enorme zeemonster). Een
andere vorm van heilige hulp is zelf een heilige houding aannemen: geloof
in Christus, kalmte en heilige gebaren maken (de tweede confrontatie met
het grote zeemonster) of de geboden van Christus gehoorzamen (de
slangen). Alleen in het geval van het wilde zwijn wordt het gevaar over-
wonnen en beëindigd. Het beest wordt gedood door de heilige. Dit wordt
niet volbracht met fysieke kracht en geweld, maar door heilige gebaren en
woorden. De reden voor de dood van de ever zou kunnen liggen in de
inheems Ierse visie op eer. Het everzwijn valt Columba zelf aan, die onder
de bescherming van God staat. Dit is een schending van Gods eer en wordt
streng gestraft. De algemene lijn in het heiligenleven is echter dat Columba
aan de kant staat van levengevende machten, terwijl de mensen die kwaad
doen en de demonen een doodbrengende macht vertegenwoordigen. In het
geval van ernstig onrecht en schade echter veroordeelt de heilige de
schuldigen tot de dood en de hel. Het verhaal over het wilde zwijn zou dus
gezien kunen worden als een voorbeeld om te tonen dat men heiligen met
het hoogste respect dient te behandelen.

De monsters in de *Brief* vertegenwoordigen non-moreel kwaad. Ze zijn
de instrumenten van God, gebruikt om Gods orde te bewaken. Ze hebben
een dubbele aard: enerzijds vertegenwoordigen ze natuurlijke rampen en
anderzijds hebben ze bovennatuurlijke kenmerken, die als apocalyptisch en
eschatologisch geclassificeerd zijn. De redenering in de *Brief* is dat moreel
kwaad non-moreel kwaad veroorzaakt. Moreel kwaad bestaat uit het niet
gehoorzamen van goddelijke geboden, met name het niet eren van de
zondag. Non-moreel kwaad zijn de rampen die op aarde plaatsvinden, zoals
de vernietiging aangericht door monsters. God legt de geboden op en
beslist als rechter over de sancties: beloning voor gehoorzaamheid en
bestraffing voor overtreding. Moreel kwaad is in de *Brief* zonde, begaan
door mensen die aldus non-moreel kwaad veroorzaken. Alle plagen en al
het lijden zijn in de wereld omdat mensen de zondag niet eren, zegt de
Brief. De monsters zijn een gespecificeerde vorm van de plagen. Ze staan
niet in verband met de Duivel, op wiens rol geen toespelingen worden
gemaakt in deze context. De *Brief* noemt hem de Vijand, die overwonnen
is door Jezus Christus. Deze opmerking hoort tot de context van het
cosmologische en eschatologische gevecht tussen de machten van goed en
kwaad. Het resultaat van dit gevecht is overduidelijk en bekend, en de
Brief spoort de mensheid aan te kiezen voor de machten van het goede
door de goddelijke regels te gehoorzamen. De natuurlijke rampen genoemd
in de *Brief*, zoals sprinkhaanplagen en buitengewoon slecht weer, worden
niet opgevat als pech of zinloos ongeluk, maar zijn dreigementen en
straffen veroorzaakt door slecht menselijk gedrag. De bovennatuurlijke
kenmerken van de straffen verwijzen naar Gods plan met de Tijd. De
metafysische ideeën over het concept 'tijd' zijn in de christelijke godsdienst
geleidelijk aan ontwikkeld. Oudtestamentische thema's, zoals het kosmolo-
gische en eschatologische gevecht, zijn erin opgenomen. Het concept zoals
dat in de *Brief* gevonden wordt, kan als volgt worden samengevat: er zijn
veel rampen en er is veel lijden in de wereld, maar daar zal een eind aan
komen. Intussen moeten mensen op een goede wijze leven en zo het goede

veroorzaken. Ze moeten de zondag eren en genade betonen aan mensen met weinig macht. De *Brief* geeft een expliciet beeld: de overtreding van regels is direct verbonden met rampen die hierdoor veroorzaakt worden, zij het dat God hiertussen als rechter staat. Het is geen automatisme. Deze zienswijze biedt tegelijk een uitweg. Niet alleen geeft de tekst regels over hoe te leven, maar er worden ook regels gegeven over wat te doen als het misgegaan is. In het wetsgedeelte van de tekst wordt een gedetailleerd systeem van boetes geboden, waarin duidelijk wordt voorgeschreven hoe de balans hersteld kan worden, of in een meer christelijke terminologie: hoe een verzoening tot stand kan worden gebracht. Men kan boeten voor de begane zonden en zo greep krijgen op het kwaad dat men zelf veroorzaakt heeft. In het boetesysteem wordt elke overtreding vergezeld door een voorschrift hoe men de balans kan herstellen of boeten voor de zonde en verzoening tot stand brengen. De verstoorde relatie met God wordt zo hersteld.

Van Chaos tot Vijand

Non-moreel kwaad hoort bij het bestaan op aarde. Dat is nu eenmaal zo. Dit kan geconcludeerd worden uit het *Avontuur*. Het *Leven* geeft een soortgelijke boodschap: de schepping heeft haar gevaarlijke kanten. In de christelijke godsdienst wordt dit verklaard door het verhaal over de eerste zonde. Het leven op aarde was oorspronkelijk perfect, maar door de zonde begaan in het paradijs is kwaad deel van het leven geworden. Non-moreel kwaad is opnieuw verklaard als veroorzaakt door moreel kwaad. In het *Leven* wordt moreel kwaad geïnspireerd door een bovennatuurlijk persoon: de Duivel. In de *Brief* zijn het mensen die moreel kwaad doen, zonder dat er naar demonische inspiratie verwezen wordt. Moreel kwaad wordt niet gepersonifieerd in het *Avontuur*; non-moreel kwaad is natuurlijk kwaad, ook de machten van de chaos genoemd. De christelijke teksten introduceren de personificatie van kwaad, in de *Brief* de Vijand genoemd.

Deze lijn — van Chaos tot Vijand — is ook in de bijbel te ontwaren. God verslaat de chaotische machten van de monsters en de zee in het kosmologische oergevecht. De strijd met Leviathan waarnaar verwezen wordt in o.a. de *Psalmen* en *Job* is hier een voorbeeld van. Een latere ontwikkeling is het verhaal over de gevallen aartsengel, de Duivel. In het Oude Testament in het verhaal over het paradijs in *Genesis* wordt de slang, die de weg naar de zonde wijst, nog niet verbonden met de Duivel. Dit gebeurt later: in de *Openbaring van Johannes* in het Nieuwe Testament. Deze ontwikkeling in de kosmologie heeft een parallel in de eschatologie: in *Jesaja* is te lezen dat God Leviathan aan het eind van de tijd zal over-winnen. Leviathan is hier opnieuw een chaosmacht. Het eschatologische gevecht in de *Openbaring* verwijst echter naar de overwinning op de draak, die de oude slang en de Duivel is. De beesten die een rol in de kosmologie spelen — de slang en de draak in de zee — zijn nu geïdentificeerd als de Vijand. In de tijd dat de christelijke religie naar Ierland komt, is het verhaal over het concept de Tijd helemaal ontwikkeld. In het begin van de tijd viel de trotse aartsengel en hij werd de Duivel. De slang (geïnspireerd

door of vorm van de Duivel) bracht de val van de mensheid teweeg en het
kwaad en de dood kwamen in de wereld. De traditie over het kosmologi-
sche gevecht met chaosmachten zoals de zee, Leviathan en andere monsters
bestaat naast het paradijsverhaal. In het midden van de tijd kwam Jezus
Christus op aarde. Hij versloeg de Duivel die hem in verzoeking probeerde
te brengen in de woestijn. Hij overwon de dood (en haalde de hel leeg
volgens niet-canonieke tradities) door zijn eigen dood en opstanding. Aan
het einde van de tijd zal het slotgevecht met de draak zijn, die de Duivel
is. Het resultaat zal zijn dat de Duivel/draak, de hel, de dood en de zee
niet meer zullen bestaan.

De drie Ierse teksten tonen eveneens een ontwikkeling van Chaos naar
Vijand, maar ze verbinden de Duivel niet met monsters. Sommige van de
monsters gaven wel aanleiding tot deze verbinding: het zeemonster, de
slangen en de *bruch*. De slang is een vorm van de Duivel in de *Openba-*
ring en het zeemonster wordt uitgelegd als de Duivel in de *Physiologus*.
Deze tekst legt de egel eveneens als de Duivel uit, op grond van het
kenmerk dat ook aan de *bruch* wordt toegeschreven. (Er zijn bovendien
parallellen tussen de vurige ogen en stekels van de *bruch* en die van een
duivel in de *Passie van Bartholomeus*.) Het overduidelijke moralisme van
de *Physiologus* is echter niet aanwezig in de Ierse teksten. De *Physiologus*
waarschuwt de lezer/es geen hoop te vestigen (te ankeren) op de Duivel
(het zeemonster), omdat deze de zondaar/zondares mee zal sleuren naar de
diepten van de hel (zee). Verder moet de lezer/es oppassen dat de Duivel
(egel) niet zijn/haar spirituele wijngaard zal binnenkomen en de spirituele
vruchten (de druiven) 'op de grond zal gooien'. De symboliek die in de
Ierse teksten gevonden wordt, is veel subtieler van aard dan deze allegori-
sche waarschuwingen.

De Duivel als monster wordt gevonden in *Altus Prosator*, een vroeg
Hiberno-Latijns gedicht toegeschreven aan Columba, dat het beeld van de
draak ontleent aan de *Openbaring*. Dit is dus een monster van de geïmpor-
teerde soort. De Hiberno-Latijnse *Zeereis van de heilige abt Brandaan*
noemt de Duivel bij de naam van het zeemonster Leviathan, maar dit is
geen bewijs voor de afbeelding van de Duivel als monster. Het Oudierse
gedicht van Blathmac dat met "*A Maire*", 'O Maria', begint, noemt de
Duivel 'Leviathan', 'Lucifer' en 'de Trotse', maar beschrijft hem evenmin
als monster. De teksten die de Duivel als monster neerzetten, zijn hellebe-
schrijvingen uit de Middelierse periode. Het is pas in deze latere periode
dat het idee van de personificatie van het morele kwaad als monster
geïntegreerd raakt in de Ierse literaire traditie.

De relatie tussen God en moreel kwaad is tenslotte een problematische
combinatie. Moreel kwaad is schade die bewust wordt toegebracht. Als
God non-moreel kwaad naar de mensen stuurt, dan is dit bewust toege-
brachte schade. Kan God moreel kwaad doen? Strikt gesproken is dit
mogelijk. Maar deze visie is binnen een religieuze wereldbeschouwing
voor de gelovigen problematisch. De Ierse teksten uit deze studie bieden
een oplossing voor dit probleem. In het *Leven* wordt de figuur van de
Duivel naar voren geschoven tussen de mensen en God in: schade/kwaad
wordt veroorzaakt door de Duivel. God staat dit toe, maar is tegelijk

beschikbaar voor de hulp. In de *Brief* is het concept van de zonde de oplossing: als God met de straffen slaat, dan hebben de mensen het zichzelf aangedaan. Hun zonden zijn de oorzaak van de ellende en God straft om hun dat te leren. In het *Avontuur* is het probleem niet aanwezig, aangezien het geen persoonlijke God is die de sancties toedient, maar de blinde en automatische werking van de onpersoonlijke macht van het Lot, die de balans herstelt en om deze reden 'toeslaat'. Op deze manier ligt de verantwoordelijkheid bij de mensheid die de fouten maakt, evenals in de *Brief*. De fouten worden in het *Avontuur* gekarakteriseerd als gebroken taboes, in plaats van als begane zonden. Expliciete morele oordelen over wat goed en fout is, zoals in het *Leven* en de *Brief* gevonden worden, zijn afwezig in het *Avontuur*, hetgeen mogelijk veroorzaakt wordt door het betreffende genre. Het *Avontuur* is een verhaal, terwijl het *Leven* en de *Brief* meer het karakter van religieuze verhandelingen hebben.

Kwaad en het menselijk bestaan

Het leven op aarde is gevaarlijk en mensen moeten het kwaad dat deel uitmaakt van hun bestaan onder ogen zien en ermee omgaan. Dit onderzoek heeft zicht gegeven op twee van de manieren, waarop mensen dit doen: ten eerste, door het formuleren van regels, en ten tweede, door het interpreteren van kwaad: men zoekt naar de betekenis van kwaad en geeft het zo een plaats in de levensbeschouwing.

De regels, die geformuleerd worden, slaan zowel op non-moreel als moreel kwaad. Gevaarlijke plaatsen en situaties moeten vermeden worden, of men moet zich kwaliteiten aanmeten, waarmee men het gevaar/kwaad aankan. Voorbeelden zijn gegeven van taboes en profetische adviezen. Duidelijk is dat er een speciale klasse mensen is die speciale kennis heeft over gevaar: druïden, profeten en andere mensen met kennis over de verborgen dingen van het leven. Soms wordt verborgen kennis direct geopenbaard door de Andere Werkelijkheid, zoals in het geval van de kleine wezentjes die het taboe oplegden en van de Brief die uit de hemel gestuurd werd. De zoektocht naar veiligheid kan soms tot zeer concrete objecten leiden die de eigenaar of eigenares beschermen: het tovermiddel waarmee men onder water kan gaan of een kopie van de *Brief* die men bij zich heeft. In andere gevallen kan men de Godheid of een representant zoals een heilige om hulp vragen, en zo een houding van geloof en vertrouwen aannemen.

Er worden ook regels geformuleerd om moreel kwaad in te dammen. Ze kunnen de vorm hebben van tradities en gewoonten van een gemeenschap, en/of van goddelijke geboden. Deze regels verschaffen eveneens een gevoel van veiligheid: zo lang men gehoorzaamt, zal geen kwaad geschieden. Het christelijke systeem biedt verder ook een uitweg als men de regels overtreden heeft. Een heilige kan de zondaar vertellen wat te doen om te boeten voor de zonden, of hetzelfde document dat het goddelijke gebod oplegt, levert ook de regels ter verzoening (in het geval van de *Brief*).

Vanuit een modern standpunt beschouwd lijkt deze zoektocht naar veiligheid en zekerheid soms door te slaan. Periodes van rust zijn goed

voor mensen, maar het gedetailleerde systeem van regels over wat wel en
niet toegestaan is op zondag schiet dit doel voorbij. Dit oordeel is zelfs nog
meer van toepassing op de beschrijving van helse straffen. Zij zijn geschre-
ven met het doel om mensen te laten stoppen met het doen van moreel
kwaad. Het is goed om een eind te proberen te maken aan misdaad en
wreedheden, maar dit te doen door dodelijke angst op te wekken is het-
zelfde als het creëren van een systeem van psychische terreur. Op deze
manier wordt een nieuw kwaad geschapen. De zoektocht naar veiligheid
leidt zo tot een gevoel van onveiligheid. Misschien waren de auteurs
wanhopig door de aanblik van allerlei soorten ellende om hen heen. De
wrede beschrijvingen wekken echter de indruk dat sommige auteurs zich
lieten meeslepen door de helse martelingen. Deze auteurs lijken besmet te
zijn geraakt met het kwaad. Misschien zagen ze te veel wreedheid of
ervoeren ze te veel onrecht en raakten ze zo meer op zoek naar wraak dan
naar het goede. De aanwijzing gegeven door Ierse heroïsche teksten is
inspirerender: men heeft juist gehandeld als de uitkomst goed is (waaraan
onmiddellijk de nuancering toegevoegd dient te worden dat het doel de
middelen niet heiligt). Men moet goed doen, niet omdat men gestraft wordt
voor het doen van kwaad, maar omdat goed doen de kwaliteit van het
leven verbetert.

De andere manier om met kwaad om te gaan is het te interpreteren, te
zoeken naar de betekenis ervan. Men kan zich geroepen voelen iets te doen
met de manier waarop het leven verloopt. Een gebeurtenis, een droom of
andere lotgevallen kunnen uitgelegd worden als boodschappen over het
leven en op deze manier kan aan het kwaad ook betekenis gegeven worden.
Misschien wordt het kwaad veroorzaakt door het Lot of gezonden door
God; de Andere Werkelijkheid lijkt zich tot de slachtoffers te richten met
een boodschap. Deze interpretatie kan op kleine schaal geformuleerd
worden, als de getroffene een individu is, of op grote schaal als een hele
groep betrokken is. De mensen die non-moreel kwaad interpreteren als
veroorzaakt door moreel kwaad hebben een anthropocentrische visie op het
leven. Zelfs als de loop der gebeurtenissen bepaald wordt door bovenna-
tuurlijke machten zoals het Lot of God, dan is het toch menselijk gedrag
dat de dingen laat gebeuren.

Menselijk gedrag centraal stellen in de interpretatie van kwaad heeft
voor- en nadelen. Als menselijk gedrag zo belangrijk is, wordt de indruk
gewekt dat men greep op de werkelijkheid heeft. Men kan de loop der
gebeurtenissen beïnvloeden. De chaosmachten die het kwaad veroorzaken,
zijn niet langer machten waartegenover men zich machteloos en onderwor-
pen voelt. De interpretatie dat menselijk gedrag verantwoordelijk is voor
wat gebeurt, is een instrument dat gevoelens van machteloosheid verdrijft.
Als het kwaad niet betekenisloos is, kan men er iets mee doen. Misschien
concludeert men dat het vermeden moet worden of dat goddelijke hulp
nodig is om het onder ogen te komen, maar dit betekent in ieder geval dat
men er niet hulpeloos in verdrinkt. Het vertrouwen in goddelijke hulp
betekent dat men niet verlamd raakt in confrontaties met het kwaad. Men
'ontvangt' kracht en hoop om het aan te kunnen. Op deze manier heeft
men een zekere greep op het kwaad, wat duidelijk een voordeel is. Men

kan gevoelens van wanhoop en machteloosheid, die tot passiviteit leiden, bestrijden.

Er zijn echter ook nadelen verbonden aan deze levensbeschouwing. Het kan gevaarlijk zijn teveel toe te schrijven aan de eigen verantwoordelijkheid. Als non-moreel kwaad iemand overkomt, is dat de eigen schuld van deze persoon, volgens deze zienswijze. Er is in deze levensbeschouwing geen plaats voor toeval en als deze denkwijze rigide toegepast wordt, kan dit genadeloos zijn voor slachtoffers van kwaad. Als iemand ziek is, bijvoorbeeld, dan is dit veroorzaakt door eigen schuld. Dit beruchte systeem van *blaming the victim* moet verworpen worden, want er zijn chaosmachten en vormen van kwaad waartegenover we machteloos zijn en die ieder van ons bij toeval kunnen treffen. Een ander nadeel van deze zienswijze is dat het kan leiden tot het aanwijzen van zondebokken. Als rampen plaats vinden en de mensen overtuigd zijn dat deze veroorzaakt worden door menselijk gedrag, bestaat het risico dat mensen met weinig macht binnen de gemeenschap of buitenstaanders van de gemeenschap naar voren geschoven worden als de schuldigen, degenen die het kwaad veroorzaakt hebben.

Het bijbelse boek *Job* kan beschouwd worden als een protest geschreven tegen deze manier van denken. De hoofdpersoon Job wordt ziek en hij wordt getroffen door een serie ongelukken, maar hij heeft niets verkeerds gedaan. De kosmische tegenstander, de Vijand, wordt aangewezen als degene die Job geslagen heeft, net zoals in het *Leven* de Duivel en demonen ziekten en ander kwaad veroorzaken. Maar wat zegt dit over God? Hoe kan God dit kwaad toestaan?

Er zijn voordelen aan het geloof in een persoonlijke God. Men kan bijvoorbeeld niet tot het Lot bidden. Oog in oog met betekenisloos kwaad kan men troost zoeken bij God en om hulp vragen. Tegelijk werpt de confrontatie met rampen zoals aardbevingen en gruwelen zoals genocide de vraag op: waar is God? Het kwaad dat de twintigste eeuw heeft gezien heeft het faillissement aangetoond van interpretatiekaders op grote schaal. Er is geen betekenis of doel in genocide en het helpt niet echt om een bovennatuurlijk schepsel als de Duivel naar voren te schuiven als de schuldige aan dit zinloze geweld. Het waarnemen van orde in de chaos die het leven op aarde is en betekenis toekennen aan kwaad of lijden is iets dat alleen op heel kleine schaal gedaan kan worden: men kan alleen spreken over het eigen individuele leven. Individuele auteurs hebben geprobeerd te beschrijven hoe zij de relatie tussen God en het kwaad zien. De *Brief*, bijvoorbeeld, verwijst naar de tranen van de mensen met weinig macht die naar God gaan en naar God die het hun aangedane kwaad zal wreken. Dit is een uitdrukking van hoop op gerechtigheid. In de *Openbaring* wordt gezegd dat God de tranen van de mensen zal afdrogen als het einde gekomen is. Dit is een uitdrukking van hoop op troost. De *Brief* verwijst ook naar Gods genade en vraagt van de mensen dat ze genade betonen. Misschien komt Gods genade pas tot stand als mensen genadig zijn.

We worden allen geconfronteerd met het kwaad. We moeten met het kwaad omgaan omdat het deel van het leven is. We moeten interpreteren wat ons overkomt om greep op ons leven te krijgen. Het leven is chaos, en

toch moeten we proberen daarin enige orde te vinden. Met hoop en verlangen naar het goede moeten we tussen Scylla en Charybdis doorvaren. We moeten niet naar beneden gezogen en verzwolgen worden door wanhoop en gevoelens van machteloosheid. We moeten ook niet proberen te vechten met dat wat onze macht te boven gaat en zo te veel verantwoordelijkheid op onze schouders nemen. De monsters zijn er nu eenmaal. We moeten ze onder ogen zien. We kunnen slechts *proberen* ze te vermijden.

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